

Elections, political and social activities

Current definitions

Chamber of Deputies

Organ of the Italian Parliament, elected by universal, direct and secret suffrage. According to the Italian Constitution, the members of the Chamber are elected by district, and seats are distributed among districts defined by dividing the number of inhabitants of the Republic, as resulting from the latest general population census, by 618 and distributing the seats in proportion to the population in each district. The remaining 12 seats are reserved for the Italian citizens resident abroad.

Consultative referendum

An advisory referendum on the granting of a constitutional mandate to the European Parliament, called on the basis of constitutional law no. 2 dated 03rd April 1989, submitting the following question to voters: «Do you believe that the European Community should be transformed into an effective Union, with a Government responsible to Parliament, entrusting this European Parliament with the mandate to draft a European Constitution to be submitted to direct ratification by the competent bodies of the member States within the Union?». Negative or positive response indicated popular support or otherwise for the constitutional mandate for the European Parliament.

Constitutional referendum

The faculty of constitutional referendum is established in art. 138 of the Italian Constitution: "Laws revising the Constitution and other constitutional laws must be adopted by each Chamber through two successive deliberations at an interval of not less than three months, and must be approved by the absolute majority of each Chamber in the second vote. The laws themselves must be submitted to popular referendum on the request, within three months from their publication, of one fifth of the members of either Chamber or five hundred thousand voters or five regional Councils. Laws submitted to referendum may not be passed unless approved by the majority of valid votes. Referendums may not take place if the law has been approved in the second vote by a two thirds majority in both Chambers."

Electorate

The total number of citizens over the age of 18 holding the right to vote. The exercise of the right guaranteed to the active electorate may only be limited, according to art. 48 of the Constitution, for the reasons set out in legislation. The right to vote is recognised by signing up to the electoral list at the municipality of residence, through a procedure governed by law. Failure to exercise the right to vote does not entail any form of sanction since 1993.

Electoral list

The list of those holding the right to participate in political and administrative elections and other public consultations such as referendums. Enrolment is performed by the electoral office in the municipality of residence. Municipal authorities are in fact responsible for keeping a record of the electorate resident in Italy and abroad, in order to revise and maintain electoral lists.

European Parliament

Organ of the European Union, elected by universal direct suffrage by European citizens, once every five years. The Parliament is one of the two chambers which, together with the Council, exercises

legislative power in the European Union. The Parliament holds both joint legislative and budget power with the Council, in addition to exercising democratic power over the other EU institutions, in particular the Commission. Members of the European Parliament are elected every five years. The electoral law for the election of the Italian representatives at the European Parliament was passed with provision no. 18 dated 24th January 1979, last modified by Parliament on 18th February 2009 with Law no. 10 dated 20th February 2009, introducing an election threshold of 4 per cent.

Italian Senate

Organ of the Italian Parliament, elected by universal, direct and secret suffrage. According to the Italian Constitution, the Senate is elected on a regional basis: 309 electoral seats are divided among the Regions in proportion to their population and 6 seats are assigned to the Foreign district. In addition the electoral components, ex-Presidents of the Republic also have a life-long tenure in the Senate, in addition to the senators for life appointed by the President of the Republic from among the citizens that have brought honour to the Country for the highest merit for their social, scientific, artistic or literary work.

Legislative referendum (for repeal of a law)

Art. 75 of the Constitution defines this type of referendum as a: "Popular referendum to deliberate the total or partial repeal of a law or a regulation with legal force, when requested by five hundred thousand voters or five regional Councils. Tax and budget legislation, amnesties or pardons and authorisations to ratify international treaties are not subject to referendum. All citizens called to elect the Chamber of Deputies have the right to participate in referendums. The motion put to referendum is passed if the majority of those with the right to vote have voted and with the majority of the votes validly expressed".

Parliamentary term

The period of duration of the Parliament, fixed as five years. The beginning of the parliamentary term is marked by the first meeting of the Chamber of Deputies.

Referendum

A tool of direct democracy using which the electorate is directly consulted to express their opinion on specific issues of general interest. Referendums are normally reserved for the abrogation of ordinary laws.

Seat

Each place on a collegial body assigned by vote.