

Policing in national parliaments

How parliaments organise their security

SUMMARY

National parliaments organise their security in a variety of ways. Whereas in some cases the principles of separation of powers or of parliamentary autonomy prevent police forces from entering parliamentary premises – meaning that these legislative chambers rely on in-house security services – in others the security of parliaments is ensured exclusively by the police or other state forces with responsibilities in the area of security, defence or civil protection. Other national parliaments exhibit a mixed model, whereby parliamentary security departments are supplemented by national police or military units.

This briefing provides an overview of the structures responsible for maintaining security and order in and around the parliaments of 11 EU Member States, namely Belgium, Germany, Spain, Estonia, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Finland, and also 3 non-EU countries – Canada, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). It focuses on the competences and tasks assigned to the services responsible for the security of each national parliament and highlights modes of cooperation with other external state forces. Furthermore, the briefing indicates, for each parliament, the ultimate authority in charge of the services responsible for maintaining order and security on and off the premises.



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Introduction

Security in the parliaments of the EU Member States is organised in various ways. While some parliaments rely on national police forces to secure parliamentary buildings and perimeters, others have specialised in-house security departments responsible for security and order, without any involvement from outside forces such as the police, the gendarmerie or the military. Other parliaments have opted for a mixed model, whereby parliamentary security departments cooperate with other state forces with security, defence or civil protection duties (e.g. police units, gendarmerie units, fire departments, etc.).

This briefing provides an overview of the structures responsible for security and safety in the parliaments of 11 EU Member States (Belgium, Germany, Spain, Estonia, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Finland), and 3 non-EU countries (Canada, the UK and the US). For each country, the briefing highlights the competences, tasks and chains of command of the services responsible for the security of each national parliament.

Situation in selected Member States and non-EU countries

Belgium

At federal level, the security service is common to both houses of the Federal Parliament (composed of the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate) and consists of two main branches: unarmed security agents (internal security agents responsible for security checks at the entrances and security within the Parliament buildings) and armed [military police officers](#) (equipped with non-lethal and lethal equipment). At regional level (regional parliaments), the security service consists only of armed military police officers. The 'Military Commander of the Palace of the Nation' is the most senior security officer, and takes his or her orders from the presidents of the federal and regional parliaments.

The president of the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate represent the ultimate authority in charge of security in the federal parliamentary buildings. They are assisted by a (mixed) security committee, comprised of the presidents themselves, the Military Commander of the parliamentary building, the secretaries-general, the directors-general and the senior officials of the departments responsible for the infrastructures of both houses. According to Articles 12 and 81 of the [Rules of the Senate](#), the president sees to the internal and external security of the Senate and is in charge of maintaining order and discipline within the Senate. Article 174 of the [Rules of the Chamber of Representatives](#) states that the supervision of order in the House is a competence of the House, exercised on its behalf by the president, who gives the necessary orders to the duty officers. At regional level, the security of parliamentary buildings is exercised by the presidents of those parliaments, assisted by the secretaries-general.

Belgium has a security zone ('neutral zone') around its parliamentary buildings, defined in the [Law of 2 March 1954](#) (modified in 2017) on the prevention and suppression of attempts on the free exercise of the sovereign powers established by the constitution. Only local police forces operate in this zone, however in close coordination with the Military Commander. Internal security agents and military police officers guard the external perimeter of the federal parliamentary buildings (i.e. any space between the entrance and the control barriers that is not the 'neutral zone'); they are responsible for security checks at the entrances, and intervene inside the buildings to maintain order and discipline. The size and the composition of the detachment vary and are determined by the Military Commander. Military police officers have the same duties in the regional parliamentary buildings, with the exception of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community.

According to Article 1/1 of the [Law of 2 March 1954](#), any person wishing to enter the premises of the legislative assembly may be asked to provide an identity document and may be subject to a search aimed solely at detecting weapons or dangerous objects that could jeopardise the safety of those

present on the premises. At federal level, these checks are carried out by security agents. At regional level, these checks are conducted by military police officers, with the exception of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community. Anyone who refuses to undergo these checks or is found to be in possession of a weapon or dangerous object may be denied access to the Parliament buildings.

Estonia

The seat of the Riigikogu (the Parliament of Estonia) is Toompea Castle. Its security is ensured by the *Riigikogu Security Unit of the Security Services Office of the North Prefecture of the Police and Border Guard Board* (i.e. the [national police](#)). Security police officers guard the premises around the clock. In addition, the Facilities Department of the Chancellery of the Riigikogu is responsible for taking security measures and ensuring the smooth operation of security systems (i.e. it provides the Riigikogu Security Unit with technical assistance). The Riigikogu Security Unit is composed of 20 staff, including the head of unit. The head of the Riigikogu Security Unit (a senior security police officer) reports to the head of the Security Services Office, who in turn is subordinate to the Prefect of the North Prefecture reporting to the director-general of the Police and Border Guard Board.

The main tasks of the Riigikogu Security Unit are laid down by a directive of the Minister of the Interior, stating that the Police and Border Guard Board carries out manned security services in the Riigikogu and manages the entire entry regime. In so doing, the unit may refuse entry to the premises to individuals or check the personal data of individuals when allowing their entry. In short, the Unit: ensures the integrity of the premises of the Riigikogu and the preservation of its property; manages the entry regime to the premises in accordance with the Procedure for Entry and Security of the Premises of the Riigikogu; and ensures order in the session hall and galleries during the sittings of the Riigikogu, in accordance with the Procedure for Entry and Security of the Premises of the Riigikogu and the Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Internal Rules Act.

Finland

The Parliamentary Office [Security Department](#) is responsible for ensuring the security of the unicameral Finnish Parliament (Eduskunta in Finnish/Riksdagen in Swedish), according to the [Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Office \(1480/2015\), §9](#). The powers of the Security Department are governed by the [Act on Security Measures in Parliament \(364/2008\)](#). The Security Department is one of the six departments of the [Parliamentary Office](#). It is responsible for developing Parliament's security system and keeping it operational in all circumstances; in addition, it handles rescue and civil defence activities. The Security Department, with a staff of 44, consists of four services: 1) management and expert services; 2) security control centre; 3) visitor entrance control; and 4) speaker's transport service. The director of security reports to the speaker and secretary-general.

In accordance with the [Act on Security Measures in Parliament \(364/2008\)](#), Finnish Parliament security officers have the power to carry out security checks, including identity checks, personal screenings, inspection of vehicles and inspection of postal and other deliveries, on the Parliament's premises and other premises subject to the Parliamentary administration, as well as in the immediate vicinity of the premises (the security area), in order to protect the activities of Parliament and ensure the maintenance of security and order in Parliament. The security officers have the right to seize a prohibited product found during a security check. They may also deny a person access to the restricted security area or order them to leave it, or apprehend the person, if this is necessary to prevent serious danger to other people or property. In the performance of their duties, the security officers have the right to use force, having regard to the person's conduct and other circumstances, in order to carry out a background check, remove a prohibited product, prevent a person from entering a security area, or remove and arrest a person. In addition, at the request of the secretary general, the Parliamentary Office has the right to receive official assistance from the police in order to protect the activities of and preserve order in the Parliament.

France

The French Parliament is bicameral, composed of the [National Assembly](#) and the [Senate](#). The principle of [autonomy of the chambers](#) (which draw up their own rules and enjoying financial, administrative, and police autonomy) applies to both chambers, in line with the separation of powers. As an example of police autonomy, surveillance of the Palais Bourbon (National Assembly) and the Palais du Luxembourg (Senate) is carried out by Republican Guard units assigned to each chamber.

In the **French National Assembly**, [internal security](#) is dealt with by several bodies:

- The **Reception, Security and Safety Division** (National Assembly staff) is part of the General Administration and Security Service, under the authority of the president and the quaestors and is composed of the 'reception-meetings' unit and the surveillance service. The former counts around 50 staff members and is tasked with welcoming external visitors, conducting security checks at the entrances of the buildings and delivering provisional badges for visitors and permanent badges for staff. The latter is in charge of surveillance at entrances and controlling vehicle access; there is round-the-clock surveillance of the buildings.
- The **Republican Guard** – military detachment ([Second Infantry Regiment](#)) – is placed under the authority of a military commanding officer reporting to the president of the National Assembly. It is in charge of the military protection of the Assembly, both surveillance and intervention. The commanding officer is responsible for liaising with civil and military authorities when it comes to the external security of the Assembly; when necessary, the Republican Guard manages internal security operations such as explosives detection. It is the only armed force allowed to enter the parliamentary premises.
- The **fire brigade detachment** is composed of around 20 firefighters under the authority of an officer, who also has the task of prevention advisor to the director of administrative services. It is in charge of the entire fire safety system.
- **Police officers** (three) are placed under the authority of the president of the National Assembly and are tasked with liaising with national police services, e.g. to check the criminal records of visitors or external services providers; they also ensure that visitors do not disturb the work of the assembly during public sessions.

External security (around the buildings) is ensured by the Paris police department.

The security of the National Assembly, as regards both safety of the institution and security of people and assets, is the responsibility of its president, who has general and permanent executive power. According to the [1958 decree](#) on the functioning of the parliamentary assemblies (Article 3) and the Assembly's [rules of procedure](#) (Article 13), the president is responsible for both internal and external security. However, so far, no National Assembly president has had to use their full [powers](#) regarding external security. Maintaining public order outside Assembly buildings is the responsibility of the Minister for the Interior and, by delegation, the Paris Chief of Police. Nevertheless, the Assembly president has the power to ask the police to take necessary measures at any time to ensure the external security of the Assembly buildings or to keep access to the buildings free.

As regards the **Senate**, no information is directly available about how security is organised. It seems security and policing in the two chambers are organised in a similar way, as they are regulated by the same decree and by similar provisions in their respective rules of procedure. The Senate has a Security Department, part of the [Reception and Security Directorate](#). The tasks of this directorate include ensuring the surveillance and security of the Palais du Luxembourg and of the Luxembourg Gardens; guaranteeing the protection of people and assets; issuing access badges for the main building and annexes, as well as cards for vehicle entry and parking; and the telephone dispatching system. A Republican Guard regiment operates under the authority of the Senate president, who is

responsible for both the internal and external security of the Senate and has policing powers within the Senate (Article 3 of the 1958 decree; Article 90 of the Senate [Standing orders](#)).

Germany

The German **Bundestag** is the national parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany, seated in the Reichstag building in Berlin. The Bundestag is its own police district, where the president exercises his or her proprietary right (Hausrecht) and police authority (Polizeigewalt), as per Article 40(2) of the [German Constitution](#), enshrining the principle of separation of powers. The article states that searches or seizures may not take place on Bundestag premises without the president's authorisation. By transferring police powers to the president, the properties of the Bundestag are beyond the jurisdiction of state police. The public prosecutor's office and judges can act in the parliamentary area only with the authorisation of the Bundestag president. In line with the proprietary right, the president may decide whether to allow the [access](#) of individuals to the Bundestag. It is [disputed](#) whether this authority could be invoked against members or political groups.

General police law applies to the performance of [police](#) duties by the police at the German Parliament. Instructions issued by the president of the Bundestag ([part 1](#) and [part 2](#)) for his or her police officers are based on police law. The regulations regarding the powers of intervention largely correspond to those of the police laws of the *Länder* and the Federal Police Act; the federal police regulations, insofar as they apply to the Bundestag, are binding for the police at the German Bundestag. The police officers of the Bundestag are federal law enforcement officers (Section 1(2) of the [Federal Police Act](#)). Their official title bears the addition 'at the German Bundestag' and they belong to the Bundestag administration. In accordance with the [Federal Civil Service Act](#), the president of the Bundestag is the ultimate service authority. In September 2019, the Police at the German Bundestag [comprised](#) 169 officials (private security staff not included). Local police may be called upon on the basis of the principle of mutual assistance, enshrined in Article 35 of the German Constitution. The [Police and Security Division](#) of the Bundestag is part of the Central Services Directorate-General and is divided into three branches: security, legal and investigation.

The German Bundestag Police can apply preventive measures to maintain public order and security and protect the work of the Parliament. The police officers are responsible for the buildings, rooms and premises that are subject to the Bundestag's administration, including those used only temporarily ([Rules of Procedure](#) of the Bundestag). According to Article 7 of the [House Rules of the German Bundestag](#), if anyone refuses to comply with the president's instructions and order and security are disrupted, the president may invoke his or her police authority. The person concerned may then be expelled from the premises; the president may also impose a ban on entering the premises if the Bundestag rules have been violated. To maintain security and order, police staff may employ coercive force, in line with federal law.

The [Bundesrat](#) (or Federal Council) is a federal [legislative body](#) composed of representatives of the 16 *Länder*. Its president does not have dedicated police authority; ordinary police law and jurisdiction apply. The president does however hold proprietary authority and can decide whether individuals can access the premises or facilities of the Bundesrat. The president has dedicated staff to ensure order and security in the house and is the ultimate authority for the security in Bundesrat buildings. According to the [Rules for the Secretariat of the Bundesrat](#) (Article 5), the security staff includes the [personnel](#) of the entrance service; the visitors' service; and the security officer. The security staff must ensure compliance with the rules of the Bundesrat and intervene against violations. In this sense, the security staff may deny the access of persons to the premises and may expel them. Should these measures not be sufficient to prevent disturbance, the management of the Bundesrat will take necessary measures. Anyone violating the rules may be fined or prosecuted as having committed a criminal offence or misdemeanour (Section 106 b of the Criminal Code or Section 112 of the Code of Administrative Offences). In emergency situations, all employees of the Bundesrat administration are entitled to perform security personnel tasks.

Italy

Policing in the Italian Parliament is administered by each chamber independently. In the Senate, the authority in charge is the president of the Senate ([Article 69, Senate rules of procedure](#)), in the Chamber of Deputies, it is the president of the Chamber ([Article 62, rules of procedure of the Chamber of Deputies](#)). According to the respective rules of procedure, police officers are forbidden from entering parliamentary premises (or any other building used by Parliament for its activities), unless explicitly authorised to do so by the president of the chamber concerned. All activities relating to **internal security** are mandated to the College of Quaestors, in both cases composed of three elected parliamentarians ([Article 10, rules of the Chamber](#); [Article 10, Senate rules](#)). In both cases, security measures are enforced by parliamentary civil servants. In addition, **external security** measures are guaranteed by the Public Security Inspectorates ([Ispettorati di pubblica sicurezza](#)), composed of police officers responsible for the protection and security of activities in the Parliament's buildings. Around 200 officers are responsible for the security of the Senate (Palazzo Madama) and another 200 for the Montecitorio (seat of the Chamber of Deputies). The composition of the Ispettorati di pubblica sicurezza varies, depending on the time of year.

[Article 69](#) of the **Senate** regulations assigns police powers within the institution directly to the Senate represented by its president. This means that the Public Security Inspectorate [police officers](#) must exercise their functions within the institution exclusively in the manner established by the president, in harmony with the rules governing normal police activities. In this context, the Judicial Police Office, established within the inspectorate, is also involved. With the authorisation of the president, it can initiate investigations into any dispute arising within the institution. Police officers ensure the protection of the president of the Senate, lifetime senators and chairmen of committees in Italy and abroad. They also guard the entrances of Palazzo Madama and the other senate buildings, always in uniform. Police cannot enter, except by order of the president of the Senate and when the sessions are concluded or suspended, in the plenary and the rooms of the parliamentary committees; the tribunes are an exception, with plain clothes police officers and parliamentary assistants, maintaining order as regards the visitors who attend the sessions.

The **police at Montecitorio (Chamber of Deputies)** guard the entrances to Palazzo Montecitorio and its associated structures and committee offices, as well as the tribunes, assisting parliamentary assistants when necessary. They do not wear uniforms. In addition to supervision within the structure, along with administrative and judicial police duties, the Inspectorate of the Chamber also ensures the security of the president of the Chamber of Deputies. The same limitations apply here as in the Senate, as police have no access to the plenary, nor to any premises in which the bodies and offices of the Chamber of Deputies are located or which are at the disposal of the Chamber, except by order or with the prior authorisation of the president. The police may not enter either any premises on which bicameral parliamentary bodies have their seat, except by order or prior authorisation of the president of the Chamber in agreement with the president of the Senate.

Poland

The body responsible for Parliament's security in Poland is a special corps called the Marshall's Guard (*Straż Marszałkowska*) – 'Marshall' (*Marszałek*) being the traditional title of the speakers of the chambers of the Polish Parliament, the Sejm and the Senate. The Guard is a police-like service – it is armed, uniformed and its members have police-like ranks.

The [Sejm's rules of procedure](#) define the Marshall's Guard as a 'uniformed and armed formation, performing tasks with regard to the protection of the Sejm and the Senate', and provide that 'the Marshall's Guard reports to the Marshall of the Sejm'. The Marshall's Guard secures the entire premises of the Parliament (inside and outside). The Sejm's rules of procedure state that the Marshall of the Sejm 'protects the rights, dignity and solemnity of the Sejm' and 'protects the peace and order in the whole area belonging to the Sejm and issues appropriate decisions for maintaining order, including deciding on the use, if need may be, of the Marshall's Guard'.

With regard to the Senate, the Marshall of the Senate 'protects the peace and order on the whole area belonging to the Senate' (Article 8, [Rules of Procedure of the Senate](#)). Nonetheless, compared with the powers of the Marshall of the Sejm, the Marshall of the Senate seems to have fewer competences, as the Marshall's Guard reports to the Marshall of the Sejm, who can give it orders (Article 1 paragraph 1 of the [Marshall's Guard Act 2018](#)). The Commander of the Marshall's Guard is appointed and dismissed by the Chief of the Sejm's Chancellery. The size of the Marshall's Guard [oscillates around 160 members](#) (as of 20 May 2019).

The powers of the members of the Marshall's Guard (Article 12 of the Marshall's Guard Act) include: giving orders to persons on the parliamentary premises, including orders to leave the premises, to stop a vehicle, to remove a vehicle, to remove other objects; checking the identity of persons; apprehending persons who cause a disturbance or create a danger; performing security checks on persons and luggage; checking premises using special equipment or specially trained dogs.

The tasks of the Marshall's Guard are enumerated in Article 2 of the Marshall's Guard Act:

- protection of land, buildings and installations managed by the Sejm Chancellery;
- in areas not in the charge of the State Protection Service (*Służba Ochrony Państwa*) and the Military Gendarmerie (*Żandarmeria Wojskowa*), ensuring protection for persons who are on the premises managed by the Chancellery of the Sejm;
- control of the right of persons to be on the parliament's premises;
- performance of orders given by the Marshall of Sejm and Marshall of Senate;
- anti-terrorist functions on Parliament premises;
- tracking of eavesdropping devices on Parliament premises;
- preparation of security plans for parliament and for persons on the premises;
- collaboration with other services - State Protection Service, Police, Military Gendarmerie.

Portugal

The **Security Service of the Assembly of the Republic** (Assembleia da República) is responsible for permanently ensuring the security of the Assembly. It has its own police officers, although they belong to the two main police forces in the country. It is the responsibility of the Security Service to:

- carry out surveillance of the premises of the Assembly of the Republic and ensure the physical security of its members, members of the government, high dignitaries and authorities, staff of the Assembly of the Republic, parliamentary groups and visitors, etc.;
- control the access, circulation and exit of visitors, non-accredited journalists as well as professionals who have to visit the Assembly and ensure that all of them display the visitor's badge issued at the reception;
- coordinate, together with the competent services of the Assembly, fire prevention and fire-fighting or other situations that might endanger or damage persons and premises.

The Security Service of the Assembly of the Republic is composed of:

- a security officer supervising and coordinating the Security Service;
- a deputy security officer working under the command of the security officer;
- a deployment of the National Republican Guard (*Guarda Nacional Republicana*) – which, inter alia: ensures the peripheral security of the premises; controls access to the inner and underground car park; and ensures the permanent operation of the Security Room;
- a deployment of the Public Security Police (*Polícia de Segurança Pública*) – which, inter alia, controls access to the premises; supports the Assembly staff on duty at entrances; maintains order in the galleries open to the public, under the president's instructions; guards and monitors the car parks outside the Assembly's seat (São Bento Palace).

The ultimate authority in charge of security is the president of the Assembly of the Republic, through the secretary-general. The parliament's security service is headed by a colonel of the National Republican Guard, answering directly to the secretary-general of the Parliament.

Romania

The Romanian Parliament consists of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, which share the same building, the Palace of Parliament. [Order](#) in the Palace of Parliament is maintained by the specialised departments of both chambers according to their rules.

In the **Chamber of Deputies**, the Home Affairs Directorate is the responsible for the security of the spaces within the Palace of Parliament under the responsibility of the Chamber, in cooperation with other state forces. The personnel of the Home Affairs Directorate is assimilated, by law, to persons fulfilling a function involving the exercise of public authority. The **Home Affairs Directorate** has four departments, whose tasks are set out in Articles 77-81 of the [Rules regarding the organisation and functioning of the services of the Chamber of Deputies](#).

In the **Senate**, the Home Affairs office, [part](#) of the Directorate-General for the Administration of the Patrimony, ensures the security of the spaces under Senate responsibility by, inter alia: checking the entry and exit of persons, vehicles and goods and issuing access permits for guests for these areas; maintaining order for the normal conduct of parliamentary and extra parliamentary activities in the areas under Senate responsibility; and issuing senators' badges and accreditation for journalists, etc.

The security of the **building of the Palace of Parliament and of its courtyard** is the responsibility of the [Protection and Guard Service](#) (Serviciul de Protecție și Pază, SPP), in cooperation with the Home Affairs Directorate of the Chamber and forces of the Ministry of Interior (the Gendarmerie, the Police and the Department for Emergency Situations of the city of Bucharest). Their duties are set out in the laws applicable to each, in their own organisational rules and in protocols of cooperation. The forces guarding the Palace of Parliament are led by their respective commanders. The SPP, as the institution tasked with guarding the workplaces of Romanian dignitaries, takes care of operational coordination as regards the building's security. The SPP also provides for the protection of Romanian and foreign dignitaries present in Parliament. In crisis situations or to prevent a danger to the building's security, the SPP coordinates all actions and forces.

The **Gendarmerie** monitors and guards goods and objects of value in the courtyard and controls vehicle access at the entry and exit points of the perimeter of the Palace of Parliament. The personnel of the Gendarmerie structure may also, when required, control the access documents of persons at the entry points of the courtyard of the Palace. In the event of a disturbance of the public order in the courtyard or inside the Palace of Parliament, the Gendarmerie intervenes, at the request of the SPP or the Home Affairs Directorate, in accordance with the cooperation protocols.

To maintain order **within the building**, the internal specialised structures take the actions necessary to ensure: access and evidence of means of transportation and of persons; the reception of guests; the guarding and monitoring of goods and valuable assets on Parliament property. The SPP and Home Affairs Department agents are in charge of control and clearance techniques before people enter the Palace of Parliament. The Home Affairs Directorate takes care of the surveillance of activities in the building, including entry and exit points, of persons and means of transportation. In cases of emergency, the Home Affairs Directorate guides and monitors the activity of the emergency protection structures and ensures the operation of the fire signalling installations and equipment in the Palace of Parliament and the underground car park. In situations that could disturb or stop ongoing parliamentary or extra parliamentary activities, a crisis team is formed at the request of the secretary general of the Chamber of Deputies, under his or her direction.

Activities relating to Parliament's order and security are coordinated by the secretary-general of the Chamber of Deputies, to whom the head of the Home Affairs Directorate reports directly. The Senate's Directorate-General for the Administration of the Patrimony, which includes the Home Affairs Office, is subordinate to one of the two deputy secretaries-general of the Senate, in turn answering to the secretary-general, the Senate and its Permanent Bureau.

Slovenia

The Slovenian National Assembly does not have its own security service. Internal and external security (protection of the National Assembly and its land) is ensured by a unit of the Slovenian Police, the Security and Protection Centre. Article 30 of the [National Assembly Act](#) states that the protection of the National Assembly is ensured by the police in accordance with police rules and in the manner determined by the College of the President of the National Assembly. The police report on the execution of their tasks and security measures to the president. The duties of the staff of the Security and Protection Centre are laid down in the [Police Act](#) and by the [Decree on the protection of certain persons, premises, facilities and districts of facilities protected by the police](#).

The [Security and Protection Centre](#) is a unit within the [Police Specialities Directorate](#). It is tasked with operational, technical and physical protection of persons and facilities. Its main task is to protect designated persons and sites from any source of threat. The Security and Protection Centre's duties are the planning, organisation, coordination, steering, control and oversight of protection activities relating to designated persons and the facilities under police protection. The Centre also delivers staff training, prepares sector-specific legislation, cooperates with other law enforcement authorities and administers a register of people who have security clearance.

The employees of the Security and Protection Centre carry out their tasks independently, in accordance with the National Assembly's [House Rules](#) and other relevant regulations, but coordinate their activities with the [Office of the Secretary General of the National Assembly](#) in charge of security matters. The latter is the Parliament's ultimate authority regarding security, with technical and administrative duties and duties relating to the internal auditing and security of the National Assembly.

Spain

According to [Article 66 of the Spanish Constitution](#), the Spanish Parliament (*Cortes Generales*) is inviolable. As such, the security of both chambers of the Parliament, the Congress of Deputies and the Senate, is ensured by the services of each house, with each speaker assuming 'all administrative powers and disciplinary functions within their respective House' (Article 72.3 Spanish Constitution).

According to the [Staff Regulations](#) of the Spanish Parliament, **parliamentary ushers** are tasked, among other things, with surveillance within parliamentary premises, control of accreditation and access to Parliament, and welcoming of all occupants and visitors (Article 8). In addition, the security of both Chambers of Parliament is ensured by two **special national police units** of the Spanish National Police, performing the security tasks normally entrusted to the national police but on the house premises (Article 3). The [police unit](#) serving the Congress is also tasked with the security of the Spanish Ombudsman and the Court of Auditors (*Comisaria Especial del Congreso de los Diputados, Defensor del Pueblo y Tribunal de Cuentas*), whereas the other police unit (*Comisaria Especial del Senado*) is in charge of Senate security only. In the case of Congress, the service is under [the responsibility](#) of the [secretary-general](#), whereas in the Senate it is under the [responsibility](#) of the [deputy secretary-general](#) for parliamentary affairs.

Ultimate authority for security on the premises of both houses lies with the speakers. The [Standing Orders of the Congress](#) entrust the speaker with the responsibility for maintaining order and security within the house premises, granting him or her the power to adopt any measure necessary, including [informing](#) the judicial authorities of any possible crime committed within the house premises. The speaker may also decide to expel any person (including a member of the house) severely disrupting the order, whether during a sitting of the Chamber or not. In addition, the speaker is entrusted with responsibility for maintaining order in the area accessible to the general public during parliamentary sittings, so that anyone showing signs of approval or disapproval or disrupting parliamentary activities may be expelled. The judicial authorities may be informed (Article 107). [Articles 38 and 39 of the Standing Orders of the Senate](#) provide for a similar regime in relation to the maintenance of internal security of the upper house. The speaker of the Senate has

supreme authority within the house premises and has the power to adopt any measure needed to ensure the smooth conduct of parliamentary business. To that end, the speaker may expel any person from the public disrupting the order of the house, order their detention and bring them before the competent authorities if their acts are serious.

Canada

The [Parliamentary Protective Service \(PPS\)](#) was established following the 22 October 2014 [shooting](#) at Parliament Hill in Ottawa, through the merger of the three security forces: the House of Commons Security Service, the Senate Protective Service, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Parliament Hill detachment. In February 2015, the Houses of Parliament [adopted](#) a motion making the Royal Canadian Mounted Police accountable for parliamentary security. In June 2015, the [Parliament of Canada Act](#) was amended to create a single security force protecting the Parliament: the PPS.

The PPS is responsible for all matters with respect to physical security throughout the parliamentary precinct and Parliament Hill. An agreement between the Parliament's speakers and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness enables the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to lead the physical security operations of the service there. The director of the PPS (a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) is in charge of the service, under the authority of the speakers of the two chambers who act as custodians of the powers, rights, privileges and immunities of their respective chambers and members. The director also reports to the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on operational matters. The PPS is [composed](#) of three departments: Administration and Personnel, Operations and Operational support. The Senior Executive Committee, made up of the director of the PPS and the heads of the three departments, meets weekly and is responsible for advising the director on the administrative, policy and operational direction of the organisation. The key [roles and responsibilities](#) of the PPS include: protective services for parliamentarians, employees, visitors and buildings on Parliament Hill and within the Parliamentary Precinct; detection and control of access to Parliament Hill and the Parliamentary Precinct; perimeter protection; monitoring and responding to alarms on Parliament Hill and within the Parliamentary Precinct; operational communications and ensuring that ceremonial traditions are carried out safely and securely.

United Kingdom

The Parliamentary Security Department (PSD) was established in January 2016. It is led by the director of security for Parliament, who is directly accountable to the [speaker](#) (House of Commons) and the [lord speaker](#) (House of Lords) and line-managed by the director-general of the Commons and the clerk of the Parliaments. The director of security [reports](#) regularly to member bodies in both Houses, including the Consultative Panel on Parliamentary Security, and the Lords and Commons Commissions. The PSD is [responsible](#) for 'the strategy, planning and overall delivery of security across the Parliamentary Estate'. The PSD has a Special Services Agreement for provision of [policing](#) by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) as regards the security of the Palace of Westminster and surrounding estate; external policing is a matter for the Metropolitan Police Service. PSD has around 500 staff (most of whom are uniformed civilian security officers) employed by the House of Commons. They serve both Houses, which share a common physical estate, digital estate and security risks. The armed and unarmed police officers who protect the parliamentary estate are members of the MPS Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection (PaDP) command.

According to the House of Commons 2019-2020 [Annual Report](#), arrangements for security are agreed jointly by the authorities of both Houses of Parliament with the MPS. The costs are monitored jointly by the two Houses but billed individually to the Commons and House of Lords in a pre-determined ratio (70:30 in 2018-2019). The two Houses are responsible for the management of the services on the parliamentary estate in accordance with the doctrine of exclusive cognisance (i.e. 'the right of each House of Parliament to regulate its own proceedings and internal affairs without interference from any outside body', 2012 green paper on [Parliamentary Privilege](#)).

United States

The United States Capitol Police (USCP), [created](#) in 1828, was initially responsible for ensuring the security of the Capitol Building only, but its competences were expanded over the years to cover Capitol Square, and by 1935 the Capitol grounds footprints reached 126 acres. Today its [mission](#) is to protect Congress, its members, employees, visitors, and facilities and covers the [Capitol Complex](#). The latter includes the US Capitol, the House and Senate buildings, the Botanic Garden, and the Library of Congress buildings.

The staff of USCP has increased overtime, following the 2001 terrorist attacks and the 2009 merger with the Library of Congress police. Today it numbers more than 2 000 police officers and 350 civilians who support the USCP in operational and administrative tasks. In 2020 the USCP had a [budget](#) of US\$464.3 million (approximately €400 million), representing around 10 % of total legislative branch appropriations. It is [reported](#) that since 1995, Legislative Branch appropriations have increased by 26.7 % while the USCP budget has increased by 288 % – from [US\\$119.5m](#) to US\$464.3m. The largest increase happened after the 2001 terrorist attacks and never stopped.

The USCP is headed by the Capitol Police Chief who is elected by the Capitol Police Board and 'shall [serve](#) at the pleasure of the Board'. The Board, [consisting](#) of the Senate Sergeant at Arms, the House Sergeant at Arms, and the Architect of the Capitol, also ensures [oversight](#) of USCP activities. Moreover, an [Inspector General](#), nominated every five years, prepares biannual reports summarising the activities of the USCP, and receives and investigates complaints. Congress exercises its regular oversight through the Committee on House Administration, the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, and the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees.

The powers and duties of the USCP are detailed under [Title II](#), Chapter 29 of the US Code. The USCP is [authorised](#) to make arrests and enforce both US Federal and District of Columbia laws in relation to crimes of violence committed within the Capitol Grounds. Moreover, within the District of Columbia the USCP can act in reaction to [crimes of violence](#) (defined in [Section 16 of Title 18](#) of the US Code) committed in the presence of a Congress member, if the member is performing official duties while the crime is committed, to prevent the loss of life or injury to person or property. Moreover, since 1996, it is responsible for the maintenance of [security systems](#) for the Capitol buildings and grounds under the direction of the Committee on House Oversight and the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate. A member of the USCP may [travel](#) for official duties outside the US to prepare for or to accompany a member of the [House Leadership Office](#), if authorised by the House Sergeant at Arms. USCP responds to Congress and not to the Executive Branch; this implies for instance that the Freedom of Information Act ([FOIA](#)) is not applicable to the USCP as the act grants to the public the right to access records from any federal agency, but not from the Legislative Branch.

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eprs@ep.europa.eu (contact)

www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu (intranet)

www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank (internet)

<http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)



Annex – Overview of security in selected national parliaments

Country	Security assured by	Ultimate authority in charge	Legal basis
Belgium	Internal security agents and military police (federal) Military police only (regional)	Presidents of the parliaments (federal, regional)	Law of 2 March 1954 on the prevention and suppression of attempts on the free exercise of the sovereign powers established by the constitution; Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate ; Rules of Procedure of the Regional Parliaments.
Estonia	Police unit	Director-general of the Police and Border Guard	Government Regulation No 211 of 17 December 2009 <i>A list of objects guarded by the police</i> , established by subsection 3(4) of the Police and Border Guard Act . The measures applied for guarding the objects specified are set out by a directive of the relevant minister.
Finland	Security Department of the Parliamentary Office	Speaker of the Parliament and Secretary General	Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Office (1480/2015) ; Act on Security Measures in Parliament (364/2008) ; Security Clearance Act 726/2014
France	Internal security agents; Republican Guard; fire department; Paris police.	Presidents of the National Assembly and of the Senate	Ordonnance n° 58-1100 du 17 novembre 1958 relative au fonctionnement des assemblées parlementaires - Article 3 ; National Assembly Rules of Procedure ; Senate Standing Orders
Germany	Police of the German Bundestag; Security personnel of the Bundesrat	President of the Bundestag; President of the Bundesrat	Bundestag: German Constitution ; Rules of Procedure ; Instructions of the President for the Police service (part 1 and 2); House Rules . Bundesrat: Rules of Procedure , House Rules for the Secretariat
Italy	Parliamentary civil servants and Public Security Inspectorate police officers	President of the Chamber of Deputies; President of the Senate	Rules of procedure of the Senate (Chapter IX, rules 66-72); Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies (Chapter XI, Articles 59-62).
Poland	The Marshall's Guard	Marshall of the Sejm (the speaker)	Act of 26 January 2018 on the Marshall's Guard (ustawa z dnia 26 stycznia 2018 r. o Straży Marszałkowskiej) and the executive acts issued on its basis; Rules of Procedure of the Sejm (Chamber); Rules of Procedure of the Senate
Portugal	Security Service: permanent detachments of the Republican Guard and the Public Security Police	President of the Assembly of the Republic	Resolution No 20/2004 of the Assembly of the Republic (latest modification 20 March 2018); Regulation of Access, Circulation and Presence on the Assembly of the Republic premises (approved by <i>Despacho nr. 1/93, of 19 March 1993</i>); Chapter III; national security laws in general
Romania	Home Affairs Department of the Chamber of Deputies; Home Affairs Office of the Senate; the Protection and Guard Service, the Gendarmerie, the Police, the Department for Emergency Situations of Bucharest	Secretary-general of the Chamber of Deputies; deputy secretary-general of the Senate, the Senate Permanent Bureau. The other state forces have their own commanders.	Rules regarding the order and security in the Palace of the Parliament; Rules regarding the organisation and functioning of the services of the Senate , art. 85; Rules regarding the organisation and functioning of the services of the Chamber of Deputies of the Chamber of Deputies, art. 77-81; Law 333/2003 regarding the security and safekeeping of the objectives, goods, values and the protection of persons.
Slovenia	The Security and Protection Centre, a Slovenian Police unit	Office of the secretary-general of the National Assembly	National Assembly Act ; National Assembly House Rules ; other regulations
Spain	The Ushers' Service National police officers detached to each of the two Chambers	The speakers of the Congress and the Senate	Article 66 of the Spanish Constitution ; Staff Regulations of the Officials of the Spanish Parliament ; Standing Orders of the Congress ; Standing Order of the Senate ; Rules applicable to the organisation of the office of the secretary-general of the Congress ; rules applicable to the organisation of the office of the secretary-general of the Senate
Canada	Parliamentary Protective Service	Speakers of the House and Senate	Parliament of Canada Act
United Kingdom	Parliamentary Security Department; Metropolitan Police Service	Speaker of the Commons; Lord speaker of the Lords	Parliamentary Security Department , Erskine May (guide to parliamentary practice), Paragraph 6.17.
United States	Capitol Police	Capitol Police Board	2 US Code Chapter 29— Capitol Police