

# European Government Systems

## **Parliamentary System of the United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom has a parliamentary democracy. Parliament is the lawmaking body of the United Kingdom. It is composed of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The monarch is considered a part of Parliament too.

In the past, a seat in the House of Lords was passed down through aristocratic families. Today, Lords are elected by the House or are appointed to office by the monarch. The House of Lords has little power. Instead, it can make suggestions of ways to improve a bill that is on its way to becoming a law.

The citizens of the United Kingdom elect the members of the House of Commons in a general election. There are 646 members: 529 from England, 40 from Wales, 59 from Scotland, and 18 from Northern Ireland. The power in the House of Commons comes from its control of the budget.

After the election, the leader of the political party with the most members in the House of Commons is asked by the queen to become prime minister. The prime minister is the head of the government, or chief executive, and runs the government on a day-to-day basis.

The monarch is the official head of state. The monarch is a symbol of the country. The monarch is sometimes referred to as “the crown.” The monarch’s duties are mostly ceremonial. The monarch’s role is restricted the constitution of the United Kingdom.

Citizens in the United Kingdom have personal freedoms like those in the United States. All citizens are treated equally and have the right to worship as they choose. British citizens have freedoms of speech, the right to a fair trial, the right to own property, and the right to security.

## **Federal System of Germany**

Germany has a federal system of government. The German parliament is made up of two houses: the Bundestag and the Bundesrat. The more powerful of the two is called the Bundestag. The citizens of each German state elect the members of the Bundestag. The Bundestag selects the chancellor. The chancellor is the chief executive of the German government and head of the military. The president is the head of state. The president’s role is mostly ceremonial and symbolic.

The Bundesrat, the lower house of parliament, represents the interests of the state governments. Each state government selects representatives for the Bundesrat. The sixteen states each have different numbers of representatives, depending on their population. The Bundesrat is mainly concerned with law that affects the states, such as education and local government issues.

The constitution of Germany is called the Basic Law. Germany is a representative democracy and operates under the federal system. Power is divided between member states and the central government. Citizens have freedom of religion and expression. All are viewed as equal before the law. Germans have the same basic freedoms as citizens of the United Kingdom. They have equality, freedom of the press, and protection of the family. The Basic Law also states that Germany is a welfare state. This means that the government guarantees people certain benefits when they are unemployed, poor, disabled, old, or sick.

## **Federation System of the Russian Federation**

The Russian Revolution is governed under a constitution. The head of state is the president, who is elected by the people. The president selects the prime minister. The president can also disband the legislature, or Federal Assembly. The Federal Assembly is divided into two parts: the Federation Council and the State Duma.

The Federation Council has two representatives from each of the states. The states appoint the council’s members; they are not elected directly by the people. So, the Council represents the government of the states. One of the Council’s important duties is to approve the president’s choices of people to fill different government jobs.

The State Duma is larger than the Council. It has 450 members, who are elected by the people. This group controls the budget and makes the laws. They approve the president’s choice for prime minister. The day-to-day running of the government is split between the prime minister and the president of Russia.

Russia’s constitution guarantees human and civil rights for citizens. All people are equal in the eyes of the law. Russians have the right to life and dignity, freedom of speech, and the right to privacy. Citizens’ personal freedoms are based on the constitution that guarantees human and civil rights.

	Type of Government	Leadership	Role of Citizen
<b>United Kingdom</b>			
<b>Germany</b>			
<b>Russia</b>			

1. To be a prime minister in the United Kingdom, a person must first be elected to which governing body?
2. The United Kingdom is to House of Commons as Germany is to \_\_\_\_\_.
3. How are members in the Bundestag selected?
4. In the Russian Federation, which office do the people elect?
5. How is the Russian prime minister selected?
6. Compare and contrast the rights of the citizens in Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom.
7. If you had to choose one country: Germany, Russia, or the United Kingdom to live in, which country would you choose? Provide two reasons why.