

CHAPTER 13

Correlates with SS6CG3a, b

COMPARING GOVERNMENTS

Democracy in Europe

In the past, powerful monarchs ruled in most European countries. For centuries, kings and queens held power. Citizens had little to no right to participate in the government. Today, much has changed. Most European nations are **highly democratic**. In a **democracy**, the people hold the ultimate power and vote to elect government representatives.

Most European countries are **parliamentary democracies**, where the legislature (Parliament) holds much power and appoints a **prime minister** to be the chief executive (also called head of government). Parliamentary democracies often have a head of state, too. This person officially represents the nation but in reality has very little political power.

Europe also has several **presidential democracies**. **These governments divide** power between separate executive and legislative branches. The **president**, who is elected by the people, is the chief executive. In some cases, the president also acts as head of state.

Know the Difference!



Chief Executive

(Head of Government)

a country's top official who has great power and manages the day-to-day activities of the government



Head of State

a leader who represents the country at ceremonial events and official functions, but who typically holds very little real power



Quick Review



L6-BRH4

Circle the correct word or words to complete each sentence.

1. Most governments in Europe are **democracies / autocracies** in which **the people / one ruler** hold the ultimate power.
2. Most countries in Europe have a **presidential / parliamentary** system of democracy.
3. The head of **state / government** is a ceremonial position with very little real power.
4. The head of **state / government** is a country's top official and has considerable power.



Fascinating Fact



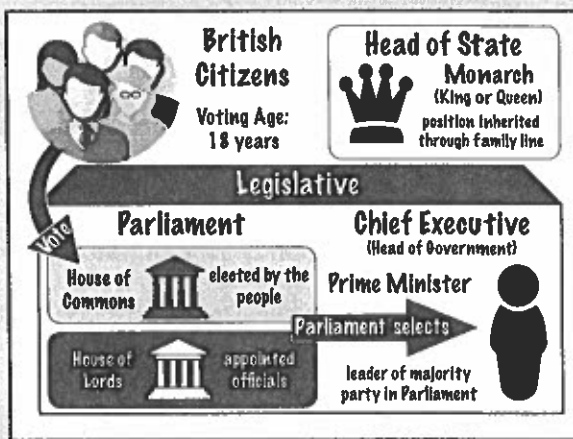
Some legislatures have one house (unicameral) and some have two houses (bicameral). You can remember the meaning of unicameral and bicameral because the prefix *uni-* means "one," while the prefix *bi-* means "two." The suffix *-cameral* means "house."

Governments: United Kingdom & Germany

The United Kingdom and Germany are both highly democratic countries. Citizens enjoy many rights and freedoms such as the right to vote and freedoms of speech, the press, religion, and assembly. People participate in their governments by running for political office, voting for representatives, and expressing their opinions on important issues. Germany and the UK share another similarity—both are **parliamentary democracies!**

In the **United Kingdom**, citizens age 18 and older vote to elect members of one of the two houses of parliament. The British Parliament then selects a prime minister from the elected legislature. The prime minister is the powerful chief executive. He or she leads Parliament in making and enforcing laws in the United Kingdom.

Before it was a democracy, the UK was a powerful monarchy. Today, the British monarch (king or queen) still reigns but has very little power. Instead, he or she is the ceremonial head of state.



In **Germany**, citizens age 18 and older vote to elect members of one of the two houses of parliament. The German Parliament then selects a chancellor from the elected legislature. The chancellor is the powerful chief executive. He or she leads the parliament (the Bundestag) in making and enforcing laws in Germany.

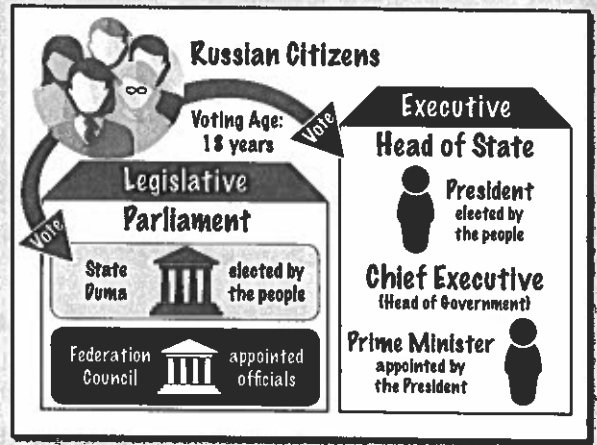
Germany has a president, but it is not a presidential democracy! The German president is appointed by a special committee. He or she is the head of state and has very little power.

Government Profile: Russia

Like the UK and Germany, Russia is democratic. Russia's Constitution promises citizens the right to vote as well as freedoms of speech, the press, religion, and assembly. However, the Russian government is often accused of violating citizens' freedom of speech and the press. The government uses its power to influence the country's media. Citizens who criticize the government may face consequences, including time in jail. Russia is different in another way, too—it is a **presidential democracy**.

In **Russia's** presidential system, the executive branch (president) and legislative branch (Federal Assembly) are separate. Russia's Federal Assembly has two houses. Citizens vote to elect representatives to the State Duma, while members of the Federation Council are appointed by Russia's many lower district governments.

Citizens also elect Russia's president, who is the head of state. Unlike most European heads of state, Russia's president holds considerable executive power. He or she appoints many government officials including the prime minister, who is the chief executive. The president can also issue orders and decrees without approval of the legislature.



True or False



L6-8RH8

Write T for True or F for False. Correct any false statements to make them true.

- ___ 1. Citizens play an important role in the democracies of the UK, Germany, and Russia.
- ___ 2. Voting is one key way citizens can participate in a democratic government.
- ___ 3. Germany's top official is its president, while the UK's top official is its king or queen.
- ___ 4. Russia's president is appointed by the country's legislature, the Federal Assembly.
- ___ 5. In all three countries, citizens elect members to one house of the bicameral legislature.
- ___ 6. In a parliamentary democracy, the head of government is part of the legislative branch.



Compare and Contrast



L6-8RH5

Complete the chart comparing the governments of the UK, Germany, and Russia.

	Govt. System	Leadership	Legislature	Freedoms
United Kingdom				
Germany				
Russia				

