

# Modern European Governments



## ***Vocabulary Tips:***

The executive branch of a government is responsible for making sure laws are carried out and for managing the affairs of a nation. In most countries, this is run by two roles divided between two people: the head of government and the chief of state. This is a bit confusing for Americans because in the USA, the President is **both** the head of government and the chief of state. Here are the differences:

- The **CHIEF OF STATE (OR HEAD OF STATE)** is a largely ceremonial role. The main role of the chief of state is to represent the state (country) at official and ceremonial functions but may not be involved with the day-to-day activities of the government.
- The **HEAD OF GOVERNMENT** manages the day-to-day activities of the government.

## United Kingdom



The **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** (United Kingdom) has a **parliamentary system** of government. The leadership of the United Kingdom includes a monarch (king or queen) as the ceremonial head of state. The **monarch**, who today is Queen Elizabeth II, has very little power. The **prime minister** is the head of government. The power in the UK's government lies with **Parliament** (the legislature), which makes the country's laws and elects the prime minister. Parliament has two houses—the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Citizens are granted basic rights and **personal freedoms** like the right to vote and freedom of speech, press, and religion, and assembly.

(A monarchy is inherited meaning you are born into the position. In most cases, the monarch is the first born son/daughter to the King/Queen)  
(Citizens vote for Parliament)

## Germany



The **Federal Republic of Germany** (Germany) has a **federal system** of government, which means that power is shared between a central government and 16 state governments. Germany's leadership includes a president and a chancellor. The **president** is the head of state but has little political power. The **chancellor** is the powerful head of government. He is elected by one of the houses of Germany's Parliament. The two houses of the legislature (Parliament) are the *Bundestag* and the *Budesrat*. Germany's constitution guarantees basic rights and **personal freedoms** like the right to vote, equal rights, and freedom of speech, religion, and press.

(The president is chosen by a special assembly)  
(Citizens vote for the legislature)

## Russia



The **Russian Federation** (Russia) is a federation established in 1991 where power is divided between a central government and 89 smaller political units. The Russian government was established in 1991 when the Soviet Union dissolved. Its leader is a **president** [chief of state] elected by the people. The president then appoints a **prime minister** [or premier], who is second-place in leadership [head of government]. Russia's legislature, the Federal Assembly, has two houses called the Federation Council and the State Duma.

Russia ratified a new constitution in 1993. It guarantees basic rights and **personal freedoms** like the right to vote, equal rights, and freedom of religion, speech, and the press. Other important rights granted, which were denied during Communist rule, include the right to private telephone calls and mail correspondence, and freedom of movement, which allows citizens to leave Russia and come back freely.

(Citizens vote for the president)