

# Government/Civics Understandings

## Chapter 24



### READ: IMPORTANT INFORMATION

**SS6CG4** *The student will compare and contrast various forms of government.*

*For detailed information and activities for this standard, see pages 37-40.*



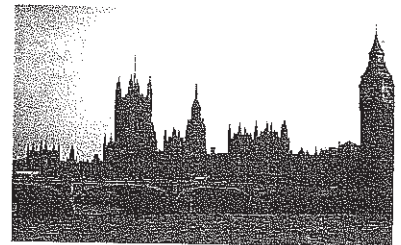
**SS6CG5** *The student will explain the structure of modern European governments.*

*a. Compare the parliamentary system of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), the federal system of the Federal Republic of Germany (Germany), and the federation of the Russian Federation (Russia), distinguishing the form of leadership and the role of the citizen in terms of voting and personal freedoms.*

*b. Describe the purpose of the European Union and the relationship between member nations.*

## Let's Look at Governments

There are many different forms of government. The two most common democratic governments are **parliamentary systems** (legislature holds power) and **presidential systems** (power divided between branches). Governments also distribute power and determine how citizens participate differently:



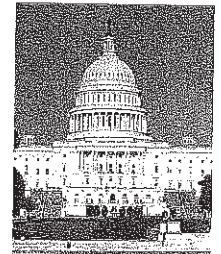
*Big Ben and Parliament Buildings, London, England*

### Distribution of power:

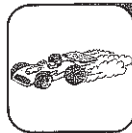
- **Unitary:** central government has all power
- **Confederation:** loose alliance; political units control their own laws; central government makes decisions only on issues that affect the entire group
- **Federal:** power divided between central government and smaller political units

### Citizen participation:

- **Autocracy:** one leader controls power; citizens do not participate
- **Oligarchy:** small group controls power; they are the only citizens who participate
- **Democracy:** people have full and equal rights to participate

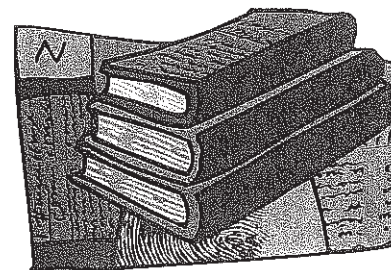


*U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.*



### Quick Quiz

Write T for True and F for False.



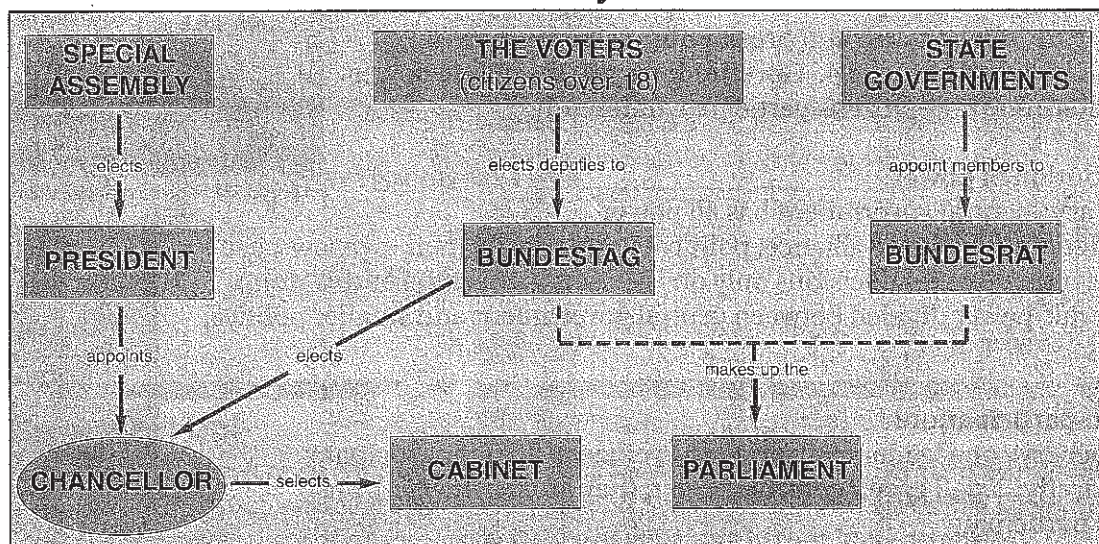
- \_\_\_ 1. The legislature holds the power in a presidential system.
- \_\_\_ 2. Citizens participate fully in a democracy.
- \_\_\_ 3. Citizens participate fully in an autocracy.
- \_\_\_ 4. The central government controls all power in a unitary system.
- \_\_\_ 5. Federal systems divide power between a central government and smaller units.

## Modern European Governments

There are several types of government in Europe. The governments of the United Kingdom, Germany, and Russia are described below.

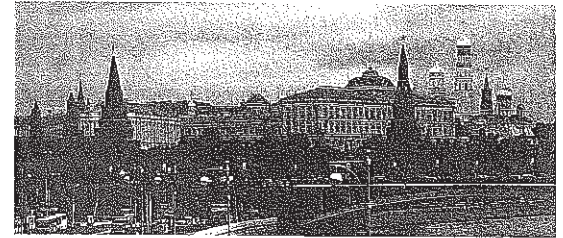
- The **Federal Republic of Germany** (Germany) has a **federal system** of government, which means that power is shared between a central government and 16 state governments. Germany's **leadership** includes a president and a chancellor. The president is the head of state but has little political power. 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 *Bundesrat*. Germany's constitution guarantees basic rights and **personal freedoms** like the right to vote, equal rights, and freedom of speech, religion, and press.

### Structure of Germany's Government



• 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** elected by the people. The president then appoints a prime minister, who is second-place in leadership. 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 often 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.



*The Kremlin, Moscow, Russia*

• 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, religion, and assembly.



### Think About It

Complete the table below comparing the governments of the UK, Germany, and Russia.

	Govt. System	Leadership	Legislature	Freedoms
<b>United Kingdom</b>				
<b>Germany</b>				
<b>Russia</b>				



### Quick Review

Circle the correct answer to each question.

1. The monarch has the most power in the government of the United Kingdom. Yes  No
2. The United Kingdom has a parliamentary system of government. Yes  No
3. The German chancellor is more powerful than the president. Yes  No
4. Germany has a federal system of government. Yes  No
5. In Russia, power is divided between a central government and many political units. Yes  No
6. Russia's leader is elected by the people. Yes  No

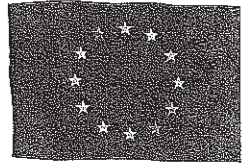


### Background Check

Although Russia's constitution calls for freedom of the press, that freedom is not always guaranteed in the former Communist country. Reporters Without Borders, an organization that monitors freedom of the press, ranks Russia very low on its list of press freedom among countries around the world.

## The European Union

The **European Union (EU)** is an organization of more than 25 European countries originally founded to encourage trade within Europe. Today, it has grown into a very strong multinational union and the world's leading trade power. The EU even has its own flag! The EU's purpose is:



- To create a peaceful, stable environment between European countries
- To promote free trade among members leading to one common market
- To help ensure the safety and security of member nations
- To cooperate and assist each other in social issues such as preserving the environment and protecting human rights

The EU has built a strong relationship between its member nations. Dropping all tariffs has led to greatly improved trade and higher standards of living among members. Wealthier countries are sharing their wealth with poorer countries. Countries are helping improve their environment by setting up strict environmental standards. Workers are allowed to cross borders easily to work in other EU countries. A Court of Human Rights has been established to protect citizens' rights in member countries.

One of the most important accomplishments of the European Union is the establishment of a **single currency called the euro**. Now, countries that use the euro do not have to worry about exchanging currency or about constantly changing exchange rates. The euro makes trade easier, more efficient, and less costly!





### Essential Skills

Put a check mark next to the benefits of the European Union.

Free school funding

Increased number of television stations

Protection of the environment

Workers can work in many other countries

Free trade

Higher standards of living

Single currency

Lower income taxes



### Look-It-Up!

Use an encyclopedia or the Internet to find out how many members the European Union has today. Write the number here. \_\_\_\_\_ What was the last country (or countries) to join? \_\_\_\_\_