**Two forms of Democratic Government**

In a democracy the role of the government is to make laws, execute laws, and to settle legal issues in court. These three responsibilities are handled by the three branches of government: the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch.

In Europe there are two main forms of democratic government: the **presidential system** and the **parliamentary system**. The **parliamentary system** is common in Europe. **Presidential democracies** are common in the Americas. Europe’s **presidential democracies** are often organized differently than the U.S. model.

The head of state is different in these forms of government. The head of state is the chief representative of the country to other countries. This person has ceremonial duties and serves as a symbol for the country. The monarch of the United Kingdom is an example. She serves as the symbol for the United Kingdom and is officially “The Queen of the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth Realms.” The U.K.’s prime minister is responsible for the day-to-day operations in the country. The prime minister serves as chief executive.

In United States, the president serves as head of state and chief executive. The president is the symbol of the country and serves as a ceremonial leader in dealing with other countries. The president also has the job of running the U.S. government on a day-to-day basis.

A Parliamentary Democracy is a type of a republic system in where the leader of Parliament, often called the Prime Minister, is only elected by the legislation (Parliament Members). This type of republic government is the most common in the world. Most of the time in a Parliament Democracy you will have a Prime Minister (that’s your leader of Parliament) and a ceremonial leader (can be called King, Queen or even President).  The Prime Minister is always running the country, while a ceremonial leader only attends formal events. In almost all cases a ceremonial leader never has any authority.

  In a Parliamentary Democracy, citizens will vote on Parliament Members to represent the people in making decisions. After Parliament Members are elected, the representatives vote on a Prime Minister. In a Parliament Democracy citizens never vote for their leader of Parliament. In this type of system you will have only one main political party controlling both the Parliament and the Prime Minister seat. A Prime Minister does not have a term of office; he can stay as Prime Minister as long as he is still supported by the controlling political party. Parliament Members can elect for a new Prime Minister anytime. Two examples of this common government system would be United Kingdom and Canada.

In a **parliamentary system**, most of the power rests with a legislative body or parliament. The parliament selects government ministers. It also elects a prime minister who serves as both the leader of the legislature and the nation’s head of government.

In a **parliamentary system (democracy)** the people have a say in their government through parliamentary elections. They elect members of parliament who will then choose government leaders. Often there is also a head of state, such as a president or a monarch (king or queen). But, the head of state has very little power.

In a **presidential system (democracy)**, power is divided between the legislature and an executive, usually called the president. The people elect their legislators and the president separately. The president and the legislature have different powers. They work together, but neither usually has authority over the other.