Who rules Germany?
An introduction to our political system
Germany: a federal and parliamentary democracy

Federal system consisting of 16 states (*Bundesländer*)

Each has its own parliament and government
Germany: a federal and parliamentary democracy

Parliamentary system:
Art. 20 of the German Constitution (Grundgesetz = Basic Law) says:

“All state authority is derived from the people."

The German Parliament (Bundestag) is elected by and represents the German people. It...
• makes national legislation,
• and controls the government.

The German Bundestag situated in the Reichstag-building in Berlin.
Overview of the political system in Germany

- **Executive bodies**
  - Chancellor
  - Federal President
  - Minister President
  - State Cabinet

- **Legislative bodies**
  - Bundestag (Federal Diet)
  - Bundesrat (Federal Council)
  - 16 Landtage (State Diets)
  - Federal Constitutional Court

- **Jurisdiction**
  - Federal electorate (all citizens above 18)
  - Länder electorate (all Länder citizens above 18)
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Executive bodies

Legislative bodies

Jurisdiction

Chancellor

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Federal Cabinet

Electoral College

Minister President

State Cabinet

Bundestag

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Bundesrat

Federal Council

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State Diets

Federal electorate (all citizens above 18)

Länder electorate (all Länder citizens above 18)

Federal Constitutional Court

Mediation Committee
The German Bundestag

- Members elected by popular vote for a 4 year term
- Working parliament with committees discussing laws
The German Bundestag: functions

Electoral functions
The German Bundestag: functions

Electoral functions
- Chancellor
The German Bundestag: functions

Electoral functions
- Chancellor
- Federal president (together with delegates from the Länder in the Electoral College)
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Electoral functions
- Chancellor
- Federal president (together with delegates from the Länder in the Electoral College)
- ½ of Federal Supreme Court judges (the other ½ is elected by the Bundesrat)
The German Bundestag: functions

Legislative function
The German Bundestag: functions

**Legislative function**
The Bundestag makes national laws. Important ones together with the Bundesrat (representation of the Länder).
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- **Gerhard Schröder**
  - 1998-2005, SPD

- **Angela Merkel**
  - since 2005, CDU
Competences of the chancellor

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Once successful: 1982 Kohl vs. Schmidt
The Federal President...
- is the head of state
- represents Germany at home and abroad
- has only very limited political powers

Joachim Gauck
Federal President since 2012
The Federal Constitutional Court

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• can impose a party ban on undemocratic parties (happened only twice: to a Nazi-follow up party in 1952 and a communist party in 1956)
Shared powers and checks and balances

Direct controls
Shared powers and checks and balances

Control through elections
Shared powers and checks and balances

Control through appointments
Shared powers and checks and balances

The complete system of controls