

Lesson 3



Focus Question #3

How does the German government promote political freedom?

- What is the role of political parties in promoting citizen participation in governmental processes?
- How are national elections organized in Germany?
- How is interest in the political process promoted in Germany?
- How has the German government supported freedom of the press while protecting the rights of citizens and immigrants?
- How is Germany moving into a new era of democracy and freedom for all of its citizens?

Background Information

David P. Conrard, author of *The German Polity*, states that Germany has proven “that a nation can overcome or change its political culture within a relatively short time. Democratic political stability does not necessarily require the centuries-long evolution characteristic of democracies such as Great Britain and the United States”.

While very successful, rapid change poses the risk of instability; on the surface, Germany appears to be developing into a liberal democracy. However, the question remains if Germany can sustain a lasting, stable democracy, and if so, what form its final product will be.

In Germany, political parties enjoy a much higher status and play a far more significant role in government and society than they do in the US. The Basic Law assigns political parties an independent role as institutions of public life that “participate in forming the political will of the people.” The parties must conform to democratic principles and publicly account for the sources of their funds. To be eligible to nominate candidates, a party must have a written constitution and platform in keeping with democratic practices. Parties that seek to impair or abolish the free democratic order or endanger the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany may be declared unconstitutional by the Federal Constitutional Court. This provision was invoked against the right-wing Socialist Reichs Party in 1952, and against the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in 1956.

Essential Content ⚡

- ⚡ Constitutional Provisions for Elections
 - Age Requirements
 - Free and Open Elections
- ⚡ Organization of Political Parties
 - Christian Democratic Union/ Christian Social Union
 - Social Democratic Party of Germany
 - Alliance 90 / The Greens
 - Free Democratic Party
- The Left Party (Die Linke)
- ⚡ Comparison of Voter Participation in the United States to Voter Participation in Germany
 - Requirements of Voting
 - Voter Registration
 - Role of Political Parties
 - Proportions of Eligible Voters Actually Voting