

The British Parliamentary System

some words about its history

- existing since 1215 (when King John signed Magna Carta) – but of course changed a lot until today
 - ➔ one of the oldest ones worldwide

Structure and legislative function of the Parliamentary System

There is the Parliament in London, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly¹ and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Assemblies can change bills concerning their territory and can enact less important laws just concerning their area.

The Parliament in Scotland – which consists of members voted in constituencies and members voted by proportional representation – creates most of the Scottish law though these laws are usually similar to the ones for the rest of the UK.

The Parliament in London – which creates the general law for the UK and for England – consists of the Monarch, the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

The House of Commons is the only part of this parliament which just contains elected members (the „Members of Parliament“ often called MPs. Every constituency² elects one MP. The MP who is supported by the majority of the MPs becomes Prime Minister and forms the government (chooses the ministers etc.). The House of Commons is the most powerful part of the Parliament (as long as the Monarch accepts every bill, see below) and more or less passes new laws.

The MPs are usually elected every four years (must be elected every up to five years) by citizens aged 18 years or over from Britain, the Irish Republic and any member of the Commonwealth.

The House of Lords lost most of its power and today it just can delay bills becoming law and propose new ones (which the House of Commons can stop).

Its members are hereditary³ peers⁴, life peers and church representatives.

The Monarch can circumvent any bill from becoming law but has not done this since 1708.

Changes in the structure of the parliament

In order to create a more democratic parliament there are some changes being in process, for example in 1999 700 hereditary peers lost their rights to sit and vote in the House of Lords.

Sources:

- <http://parliament.uk>
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- http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/24/newsid_4007000/4007601.stm
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- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_the_United_Kingdom
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland_Assembly
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Lords

Vocabulary:

- ¹ assembly = Versammlung
- ² constituency = Wahlkreis
- ³ heritage = Erbschaft
- ⁴ peers = englischer Hochadel
- ⁵ circumvent = verhindern