〈Project〉 English and Politics: the UK

British people are proud that their country has never been invaded since the Normans arrived in 1066. On these two pages you will learn about the British system of democracy and the tradition of political independence in the UK. You can also do your own political survey[1].

STEP 1: Understand the system of government in the UK

a) *Look at the diagram and the information about Parliament today on the 'Political institutions of the UK' page at the back of your book. Find the answers to these questions:*

The House of Commons

1. Why is the House of Commons the most important part of Parliament?
2. What is the title of the person with the top job in British politics?
3. How often must there be elections?
4. How many Members of Parliament are there for each constituency[2]?

b) *Talk about what you can see in the photo of the House of Commons. What is different from the Bundestag?*

STEP 2: Explain a political cartoon

a) *First read this background information.*

The UK has four parts: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Although the UK Parliament represents and makes laws for the whole country, since 1999 Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all had the right[3] to make their own political decisions in areas like education or health. There is a separate Scottish Parliament, and Wales and Northern Ireland each have a National Assembly.

b) *Now look at the cartoon on the right. Describe what is happening. What do the words below the picture tell you about the British attitude[4] towards political decisions?*

c) *There is no separate parliament for England. Why do you think some English people think this is not fair?*

"You're not splitting from[5] us, we're splitting from you."
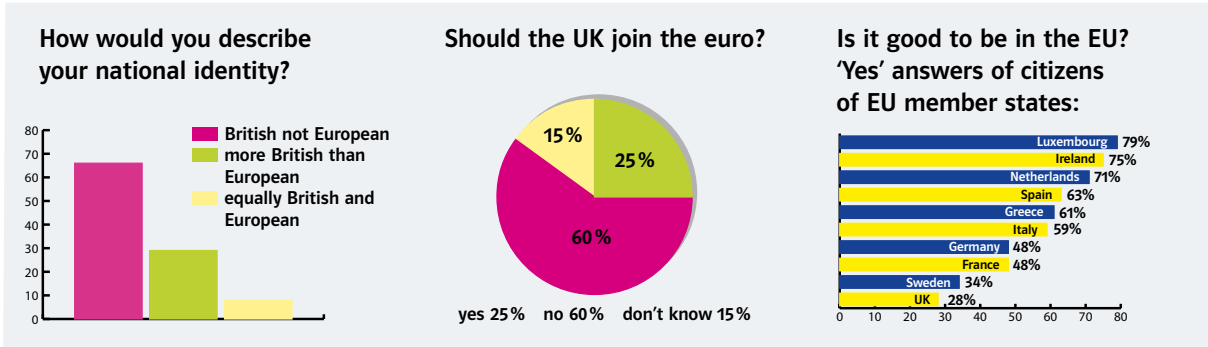
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[1]**survey** ['sɜːveɪ] = a way of finding out information (e.g. asking people questions on the street and/or in a questionnaire) • [2]**constituency** [kən'stɪtjʊənsi] = voting area • [3]**right** [raɪt] = If you have the *right* to do sth, you are allowed by law to do it. • [4]**attitude** ['ætɪtjuːd] = way of thinking • [5]**to split from** ['splɪt frəm] = to break away from

STEP 3: **Use survey results to find out British attitudes to the European Union**

a) *What do the statistics on this page tell you?*

b) *Comment on what you have found out about British attitudes.*

USEFUL PHRASES

Explaining statistics:
The bar graph shows that …
The table/pie chart …
… % of British people …
A majority[6]/Less than half/…
Compared to other countries …

Commenting on statistics:
I'm (not) surprised that …
I can/can't understand why …
I think it's OK/a pity that …
I think the results of a survey in Germany would be the same/…

How would you describe your national identity?

- British not European
- more British than European
- equally British and European

Should the UK join the euro?

15 %
25 %
60 %

yes 25 %   no 60 %   don't know 15 %

Is it good to be in the EU?
'Yes' answers of citizens of EU member states:

Luxembourg 79%
Ireland 75%
Netherlands 71%
Spain 63%
Greece 61%
Italy 59%
Germany 48%
France 48%
Sweden 34%
UK 28%

Do you agree with these statements about the EU?	Agree strongly	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree strongly	Don't know
1. It is good for British jobs and trade[7].	24 %	35%	11%	10%	19%
2. Britain's national identity is being lost.	34%	24%	19%	11%	12%
3. The EU makes decisions in an undemocratic way.	21%	23%	15%	10%	31%
4. It helps to keep peace in Europe.	26%	34%	10%	12%	18%
5. Britain is losing the right to make its own decisions.	34%	27%	15%	11%	14%
6. Britain should stay in the EU.	35%	33%	6%	13%	13%

c) *What reasons could there be for British people not having a very positive attitude to the EU?*

STEP 4: **Do a political survey at your school**

a) *Think of **one** question you want to ask other pupils (e.g. Are you interested in politics? Do you think Europe should become one huge country? Which country has the better system of voting: the UK or Germany? …?). Write the question down and prepare a grid in which you can collect the answers.*

b) *Do your survey. Ask as many pupils as possible so that the statistics will be reliable. Then turn the information you collect into a bar graph or pie chart.*

c) *Make a class display[8] of your diagrams. Comment on the survey results.*

[6] **majority** [mə'dʒɒriti] = most people • [7] **trade** [treɪd] = business (between different companies and countries) •
[8] **display** [dɪ'spleɪ] = sth to show