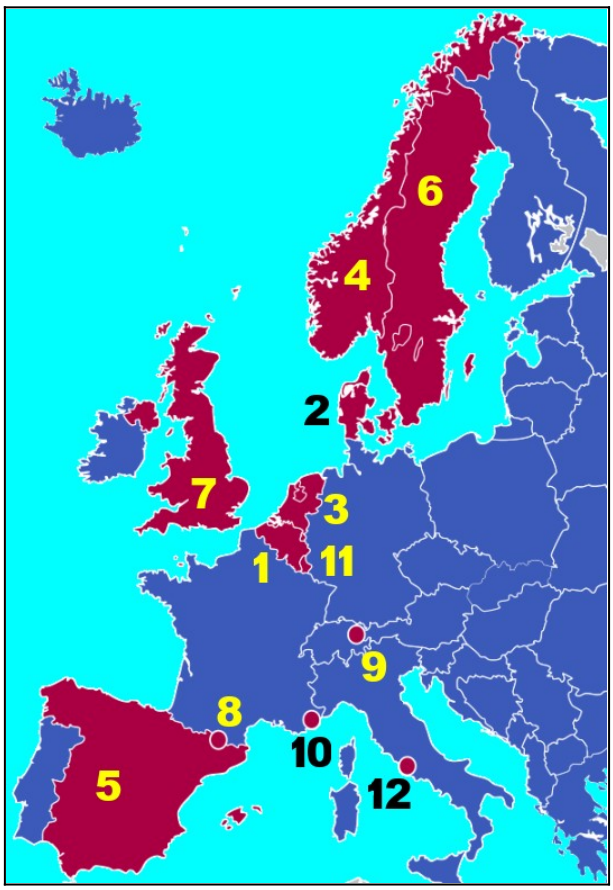
Monarchies of Europe

Monarchies were very common in Europe throughout the Middle Ages (5th to 15th centuries). However, during the 19th century, republics became more common. After the two world wars, many European monarchies were abolished. Today (2023) there are 43 monarchies around the world and 12 in Europe.

Types of Monarchy



There are 4 types of monarchy:

A) Kingdom (with a **King** or **Queen**):
1) Belgium
2) Denmark
3) The Netherlands
4) Norway
5) Spain
6) Sweden
7) The United Kingdom (UK)

B) Principality (with a **Prince** or **Princess**):
8) Andorra
9) Liechtenstein
10) Monaco

C) Grand Duchy
(with a **Grand Duke** or **Grand Duchess**):
11) Luxembourg

D) Theocratic (with a **religious leader**):
12) Vatican City

Currently, only 6 of these monarchies are members of the European Union:
Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden.

Origins

The origins of these monarchies can be divided into three epochs:

1) <u>Premodern (7)</u> (in existence since the Middle Ages):
Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the UK, Spain, Monaco, Andorra
2) <u>Napoleonic (4)</u> (formed during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815)):
Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg
3) <u>Postmodern (1)</u> (formed after 1900):
The Vatican City was recognized as a sovereign state in 1929.

Hereditary vs Elective

Most of these monarchies are **hereditary**, which means that, on the death of a monarch, a family member is succeeded to the throne. However two of these monarchies are **elective**, which means that a new monarch is elected by voting:

- **The Vatican City.** When a pope dies or resigns, the Cardinals elect a new pope.
- **Andorra.** There are two heads of state: the President of France (who is elected by the French people) and the Bishop of Urgell (who is appointed by the Pope).

Politics

Monarchies are not always “political”. We can divide them into 3 types:

1. **Constitutional**: no influence on political matters
2. **Semi-constitutional**: significant influence on political matters
3. **Absolute**: complete control of political matters

Most of the current monarchies in Europe are “**constitutional monarchies**”, which means that the monarch does not influence the politics of the state: either the monarch is legally prohibited from interfering, or they do not utilize their political powers. There are 2 “**semi-constitutional monarchies**”: Liechtenstein and Monaco – the princes (or princesses) have a large influence on politics. There is currently only 1 “**absolute monarchy**” – the Vatican City state, because the Pope exercises complete control over the state. Its government is called a “*Unitary theocratic Catholic elective absolute monarchy*”.

The Abolition of European Monarchies

After World War I, the collapse of the Russian Empire created a widespread disillusionment in the institution of the monarchy. The Russian civil war saw various monarchist, republican, anarchist, nationalist and socialist factions fight each other. At the same time, in the Baltic States, bourgeois independence movements took over, while in many other states, the Bolsheviks won power. Consequently, after World War I, the following 6 countries/states lost their monarchies:

- Austria
- Bavaria
- Finland
- Germany
- Lithuania
- Poland

During World War II many more monarchies were abolished. For example, in 1939 Italy invaded Albania and removed the reigning King Zog. Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania were all forced to join with Germany against the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Western allies and the Soviet Union. When Yugoslavia fell in 1941 the Independent Monarchy State of Croatia was established. However, with the fall of Mussolini in July 1943, the monarchy in Croatia was abolished. Communists in Yugoslavia and Albania seized power and ended the monarchies. Communists in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania also removed their monarchies with strong support from the Soviet Union. A referendum in 1946 ended the reign of King Umberto II in Italy and the Italian monarchy ceased to exist. Consequently, during or after World War II, the following 7 countries/states lost their monarchies:

- Albania
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Hungary
- Italy
- Romania
- Yugoslavia

The most recent European state to abolish their monarchy was Malta, which became a republic in 1974. Nowadays there aren’t any plans to abolish any more European monarchies.

Note:

anarchy	the absence of political authority
monarchy	a state which is ruled by a single person
polyarchy	a state which is ruled by many people
oligarchy	a state which is ruled by a small faction or a family

Current Monarchs (2024):

Kingdoms:

- Denmark — King Frederik X (since 2024) (born 1968)
- Norway — King Harald V (since 1991) (born 1937)
- Sweden — King Carl Gustaf XVI (since 1973) (born 1946)
- The United Kingdom — King Charles III (since 2022) (born 1948)
- Spain — King Felipe VI (since 2014) (born 1968)
- The Netherlands — King Willem-Alexander (since 2013) (born 1967)
- Belgium — King Philippe (since 2013) (born 1960)

Principalities:

- Andorra — Prince Emmanuel Macron (President of France since 2017) (born 1977) and Prince Joan-Enric Vives (Bishop of Urgell since 2003) (born 1949)
- Liechtenstein — Prince Hans-Adam II (since 1989) (born 1945)
- Monaco — Prince Albert II (since 2005) (born 1958)

Grand Duchy:

- Luxembourg — Grand Duke Henri (since 2000) (born 1955)

Theocratic:

- Vatican City — Pope Francis (since 2013) (born 1936)

Exercise: Identify the countries and/or monarchs:
(Answers here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchies_in_Europe) *(or click on an image to open the hyperlink)*

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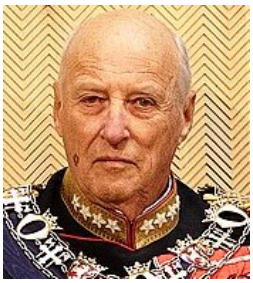
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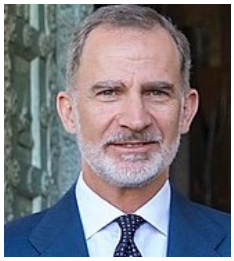
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