

Geography Alive! Chapter 14

Supranational Cooperation in the European Union

14.1 Introduction

Have you ever traveled from the United States to another country? If so, you know that crossing international borders isn't like going from one state to another back home. You probably had to stop and show identification. You might have had to trade your U.S. dollars for a different kind of money. Now imagine that you're in Europe. You're crossing the border from France to Germany. You don't have to stop to show your passport. You use the same money in both places. The main difference you notice is that people are speaking German instead of French.

People today travel easily among many European countries because of the [European Union](#), or **EU**. The EU is a *supranational* organization. In 2009, it had 27 member countries. *Supra* means "over" or "on top of." The government of the European Union stands above the governments of its members. As a result, the EU has been able to remove many barriers that once made travel among its members difficult. Members of the EU have "open" borders with each other. Many also use the same form of money.

EU countries use [supranational cooperation](#) to work toward shared goals. At the same time, they remain separate countries. While they are united in some ways, they are divided in others. In this chapter, you will learn about the forces that work for and against supranational cooperation in the EU.



► Geoterms

centrifugal force a force that divides people and countries

centripetal force a force that unites people and countries

common market a group of countries that acts as a single market, without trade barriers between member countries

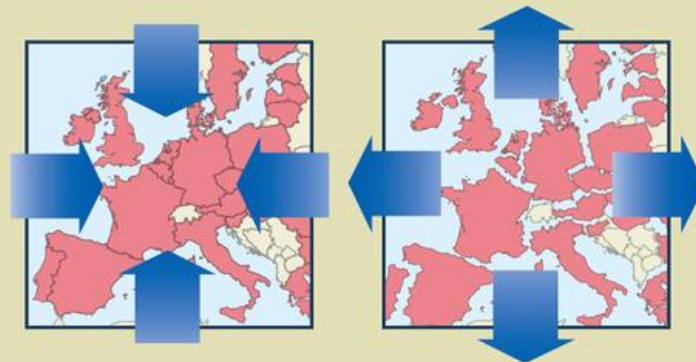
supranational cooperation a form of international cooperation in which countries give up some control of their affairs as they work together to achieve shared goals

Essential Question

What forces work for and against supranational cooperation among nations?

These two maps show Europe. The highlighted countries are members of the European Union. The map on the left represents things that unite EU countries. The map on the right represents things that pull EU countries apart. Keep these maps in mind as you try to answer the Essential Question.

Graphic Organizer



14.2 The Geographic Setting

The European Union, 2009



Europe is a region made up of many peoples and countries. Throughout its history, different forces have brought its peoples together and pulled them apart. The forces that bring things together, or unite them, are called [centripetal forces](#). The forces that divide things, or move them away from one another, are called [centrifugal forces](#). The European Union was formed to unite countries that had been torn apart by years of war.

A History of Bloody Conflict For much of its history, Europe has been a battleground. This was true of the first half of the 20th century. In this time, two great wars began in Europe. Both were so widespread that they are remembered as “world wars.”

The First World War began in 1914. This bloody conflict lasted four years and killed over 21 million people. The Second World War broke out in 1939. On one side were Germany, Italy, Japan, and their allies. Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States, and other countries opposed them.

World War II was even more terrible than World War I. It lasted six long years and left some 50 million people dead worldwide. Many European cities and farms were left in ruins. When the guns finally fell silent, Europeans wanted to make sure that such horrors never happened again.

Creating a Future of Peaceful Cooperation On May 9, 1950, a French leader named Robert Schuman made a famous speech. In his talk, he put forward ideas for bringing a lasting peace to Europe. These ideas led to what is now the European Union.

Schuman suggested that France, Germany, and other European countries work together to manage their coal and steel production. If these countries learned to work together, he said, they would not be so likely to make war on each other.

Six countries agreed with Schuman. By 1952, they had all ratified the treaty creating the European Coal and Steel Community. This group created a [common market](#) for steel and coal products. In a common market, nations reduce or remove trade barriers, such as [tariffs](#). Tariffs are taxes on goods that cross country borders.

By 1958, the same six countries created the European Economic Community (EEC). This group removed trade barriers for all kinds of goods. The EEC came to be known as the Common Market. Over the years, more European countries joined the Common Market.

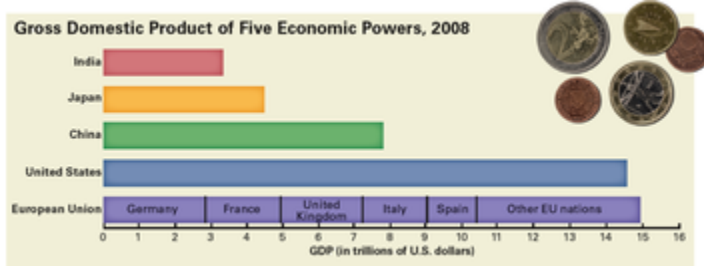
In 1993, twelve Common Market countries formed the European Union. The EU works to create jobs, protect citizens' rights, and preserve the environment. It also promotes freedom, security, and justice. Its main goals, however, are to encourage peace and prosperity, or economic well-being. In 2009, the EU had 27 member countries spread across Europe. Several other countries also hope to join.

14.3 Economic Cooperation in the EU

In the United States, people move freely across state borders. Some work in one state and live in another. Europe is slightly larger than the United States. Yet before the European Union was formed, national laws made it hard for citizens of one country to live or work in another.

Each country had its own rules about who could live or find work there. Each had its own [currency](#), or type of money. Each country charged tariffs, or taxes, on imports from its neighbors. These taxes raised the price of imported goods.

Today members of the EU work together toward shared economic goals. Many centripetal forces promote such economic cooperation. But other centrifugal forces work against it.



Economic Forces That Unite the EU The creation of a common market has been an important economic force uniting the EU. This single market benefits EU consumers in several ways. With goods moving freely across borders, people have more choices in what to buy. With no tariffs on EU goods, prices are lower. The single market benefits workers as well. They are able to travel freely to other EU countries to find work.

The adoption of a common currency in 2002 also helped to unite the EU. The common currency is called the [euro](#). In many EU countries, the euro has replaced the national currency. No longer do Europeans change money when they cross most borders. The euro makes it easier to travel and trade across the EU.

By joining their economies, EU members have also created a powerful [trade bloc](#). Hundreds of millions of consumers live in the EU trade bloc. As a result, outside nations are eager to do business in the EU. The size of its market has made the EU trade bloc an important force in the global economy. The EU has other shared economic goals. It works to create jobs, develop resources, and make improvements that encourage trade. For example, the EU has spent large sums to upgrade highways. It has also helped farmers modernize their operations.



Economic Forces That Divide the EU Other forces work against economic cooperation. EU members don't always agree on the many issues they face. Nor do they always agree on how EU money should be spent.

In general, the Western European members of the EU are wealthier than those in Central and Eastern Europe. In an effort to bring all of its members up to the same level, the EU spends large sums on

projects in its poorer nations. Some Western Europeans object to so much EU money being spent outside their own area.

Economic differences between EU members create other strains. In general, workers in Western Europe are paid higher wages than those in Central and Eastern Europe. Living costs are higher in Western Europe as well. This has led some Western European businesses to move their factories to poorer EU countries. Costs are lower there, and they can pay workers less. As a result, workers in Western Europe worry about losing jobs to poorer EU countries.

Wage differences also encourage workers in poorer EU countries to move to richer ones in search of jobs. Workers in the wealthier countries often resent these immigrants. They also fear that too many newcomers from poor countries will drive down wages for everyone.

There are centrifugal forces at work in the use of the euro as well. Not all EU countries adopted the common currency in 2002. Three members decided to keep their own currency and make their own decisions about money. Other countries have not been allowed to adopt the euro. Before joining the euro zone, they must show that they have developed stable economies. (See the map on this page, which shows which countries use the euro.)

As you can see, both centripetal and centrifugal economic forces are at work in the EU. But overall, member nations have decided that the economic benefits of supranational cooperation far outweigh the costs.

14.4 Political Cooperation in the EU

Before the EU was formed, there were many political divisions among European countries. Each nation was independent. Each nation set its own policies. Nations could choose to work together, but they did not have to. As you have read, political conflict was often more common than cooperation. The EU encourages political cooperation among its members. They all take part in a common EU government. The EU government does not replace the governments of its member nations. Instead, it is a supranational government. That is, it works above the governments of the EU countries.

How the EU Government Unites Europe The EU government works in two ways to unite Europe. First, it brings its members together to work on issues they all share. For example, it tries to take a common approach to environmental problems.

Second, the EU encourages Europeans to think of themselves as citizens of Europe. This is on top of their citizenship in their home countries. With European citizenship, citizens of member nations can live and work anywhere in the EU. They can also vote in EU elections. They have this right no matter where they live in the EU.

The EU government has several important bodies. The Council of the European Union is the main decision-making body. It is made up of national leaders from each member country. The council sets overall goals for the EU.

The European Commission is the executive body. It is made up of commissioners who are appointed by member governments. The commission's main duty is to see that EU decisions are carried out.

The European Parliament is the largest EU body. Citizens of the EU countries directly elect its 700 members. The parliament's role is to watch over the work of the European Union. It can approve or block the EU budget. This budget says how money should be spent on EU projects.

The EU government helps to unite Europe by speaking with one voice for all of its members. Within Europe, the EU focuses on shared issues, such as transportation and the environment. Outside of Europe, the EU works to strengthen Europe's role in the world. By working together, EU members have more power in world affairs than any one European country would have by itself. In these ways, the EU government acts as a centripetal force in Europe.

How the EU Government Divides Europe There are centrifugal forces at work as well in the EU government. When a country joins the European Union, it is expected to give up some power to the EU government. This may mean carrying out decisions made by the EU that it does not agree with.

Giving up power has been a problem for many EU members. Some countries still want to make independent decisions in areas like defense and foreign affairs. This is more often true when they don't agree with EU decisions.

The growing size of the EU is also a centrifugal force. By 2009, the EU included more than 494 million people in 27 countries. As the size of the EU has increased, so have the differences among the EU's nations and peoples. With more countries and cultures, cooperation has become more difficult. Finally, the idea of European citizenship has been hard for some Europeans to adjust to. A recent poll of Europeans found that almost half would not mind if the EU simply disappeared. People who feel this way may fear that their national identity will get lost in the push for a more united Europe. For them, the advantages of political cooperation may never be worth the costs.

14.5 Cultural Cooperation in the EU



In the year 2000, students across the European Union took part in a contest. The contest was to create a motto for the EU. Students from many countries sent in more than 2,000 ideas. After considering the students' suggestions, the EU announced its choice in 2003. The official motto is "United in Diversity."

The words in this motto are important. The goal of the EU is to unite Europeans into an "ever closer union." Since the EU was formed, it has promoted a common European [cultural identity](#). At the same time, the EU recognizes the [diversity](#) of its members. The word *diversity* refers to all the ways in which people are different from one another. They may include language, religion, beliefs, traditions, and values. These are the things that make each member nation of the EU unique.

How the EU Promotes a European Cultural Identity A common cultural identity is a centripetal force. The EU has worked in many ways to create a European cultural identity. For instance, it has created common cultural symbols. The EU has its own flag, which shows 12 stars on a blue background. The EU has also adopted its own anthem. Its choice was "Ode to Joy" by the German composer Ludwig van Beethoven. And every year on May 9, Europeans celebrate Europe Day.



The EU supports many cultural programs across Europe. One example is the European Union Youth Wind Orchestra. It brings together young musicians from across Europe. Also, each year the EU chooses one or two cities to be a European Capital of Culture. The EU pays for special shows and events that highlight the city and its culture.

The euro and EU passports make travel within the EU easy. As more Europeans visit other EU countries, they begin to view Europe as a united region. The EU also encourages people, especially youth, to learn other European languages.

Forces Working Against a European Cultural Identity Despite EU efforts at cultural unity, Europe remains diverse. Many languages are spoken in the EU. When people speak different languages, it's hard for them to communicate. The diversity of languages creates extra work for the EU government as well. Every EU speech and document must be translated into 20 languages. In 2008 alone, the EU had to translate almost 2 million pages.

Other centrifugal forces work against a shared cultural identity. National pride is one of them. So are competition and rivalry between countries.

Even cultural traditions can get in the way of cooperation. For example, traditional Czech foods are often cooked slowly. They taste even better the next day. Yet EU rules state that cooked food can't be served if it is more than two hours old. One Czech citizen complained, "This will make many of our best dishes illegal."

Summary - Beginning to Think Globally

In this chapter, you have learned about the European Union. The EU is built on supranational cooperation. You have read about centripetal forces that work for such cooperation. You have also read about centrifugal forces that work against this kind of cooperation.

The EU is the best example of supranational cooperation in the world today. It works because its member nations have been willing to give up some power. Just how much power remains an issue. Some Europeans want the EU to become a "United States of Europe." Others fear giving up any more power to the EU.

Cooperation among nations is not limited to Europe. Other countries also work together on problems they share. In the next section, you'll look at several examples of international cooperation around the world.