

Day has become a time for Europeans to come together to share and celebrate their common culture. The EU also supports cultural programs. 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 European Capitals of Culture. The EU pays for special shows and events that highlight that city and its culture.

As you have read, EU passports and the euro make travel easy within the EU. As Europeans visit other European countries, they come to view Europe as a united region. The EU also encourages people, especially youth, to learn other European languages. Its long-term goal is for all Europeans to learn two languages in addition to their home language.

Forces Working Against a European Cultural Identity Sometimes cultural diversity can become a centrifugal force that the EU has to work to overcome.

The EU celebrates the diversity of languages in Europe, yet those many languages can sometimes make communication difficult. To overcome the communication barrier, the EU must translate all of its speeches and documents 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, as countries have a hard time putting the interests of all of Europe above their national interests. Competition and rivalry between countries can make cooperation a challenge.

Cultural traditions sometimes clash even at EU headquarters. For example, traditional Czech foods are often cooked slowly, tasting even better the next day. Yet EU rules for their cafeteria 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!"

14.6 Beginning to Think Globally

In this chapter, you learned about the European Union. The EU is built on supranational cooperation. You read about centrifugal forces that work toward such cooperation. You also read about centrifugal forces that work against unity.

The EU is the best example of supranational cooperation in the world today. It works because its member countries 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.



Cultural Clashes in the EU

Cultural traditions can divide EU members. For example, bullfighting is a cultural tradition in Spain. Every year, matadors kill thousands of bulls in bullfights. In other EU countries, bullfighting is seen as cruel. Many Europeans think that bullfights should be banned.