Supranational Cooperation in the European Union

14

14.1 Introduction

Have you ever traveled from the United States to another country? If so, you know that crossing international borders isn't as easy as crossing state borders within the U.S. You probably had to stop and show identification. You might have had to trade your U.S. dollars for a different type of money.

Now imagine that you're in Europe, crossing the border between France and Germany. You don't have to stop to show your passport. You use the same money in both countries. The main difference you notice after crossing the border is a change in language—people here are speaking German instead of French.

People today travel easily between many European countries because of the **European Union,** or EU. The EU is a *supranational* organization. In 2004, it had 25 member countries. *Supra* is a Latin prefix that means "above" or "over." The government of the European Union stands above the governments of its members. Because it is supranational, the EU has been able to remove barriers that once made travel between European nations complicated. In addition to having "open" borders with each other, many EU nations use a common form of money.

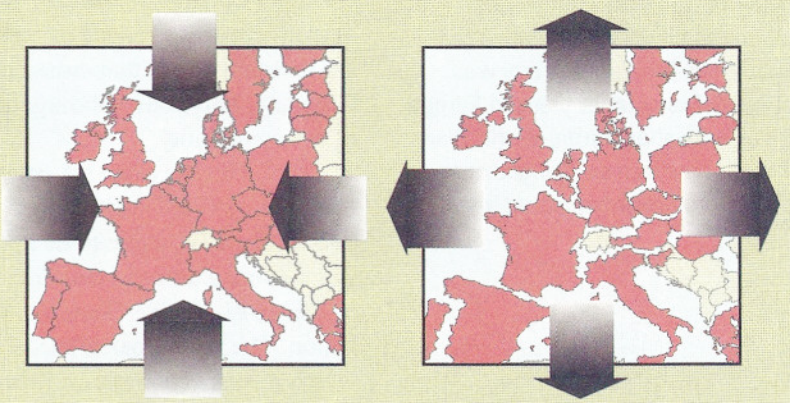
While EU countries use **supranational cooperation** to work toward shared goals, they remain separate countries. These countries are united in certain ways, but divided in others. In this chapter, you will learn about the forces that work for and against supranational cooperation in the EU.

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



◀ European Union flag flying over a city in the Czech Republic

14.2 The Geographic Setting

Europe is a region made up of many peoples and countries. Throughout Europe's history, certain forces have brought its peoples together, while others have 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. During the first half of the 20th century, European nations were torn apart by two devastating wars that also spread to other parts of the world. Both wars were so widespread that people now remember them as "world wars."

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

World War II was even more deadly than World War I. It lasted six years and claimed the lives of 50 million people worldwide. The fighting left many European cities and farms in ruins. When the guns finally fell silent in 1945, 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 cooperate, 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 a treaty that formed the European Coal and Steel Community. This group created a **common market** for steel and coal products. In a common market, countries reduce or remove trade barriers, such as **tariffs**. Tariffs are taxes on goods that cross country borders. Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands all became members of the community.

By 1958, the same six countries created the European Economic Community (EEC), which then 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 main goal of the EU is to promote peace and prosperity, which means economic well-being. The EU works toward this goal by seeking to create jobs, protect citizens' rights, and preserve the environment. It also has programs to promote freedom, security, and justice for its members. In 2004, the EU had 25 member countries spread across Europe, with several other countries hoping to join.

World War II Destruction
On May 14, 1940, German planes bombed the city of Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Much of the city was destroyed. Many other cities in Europe were also bombed during World War II. The EU was formed to make sure such horrors never happened again.

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

The European Union, 2004

The Growth of the European Union

Before 2004, all of the European Union countries were in Western Europe. In 2004, ten new member countries put Central and Eastern Europe on the EU map. The European Union promotes cooperation among member countries.

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. In Europe before the EU, citizens did not have a similar freedom to move between countries. National laws made it hard for citizens of one country to live or work in a different country.

Before the EU, each European country had its own rules about who could live or find work within its borders. Each country had its own **currency,** or type of money. Individual countries also charged tariffs, or taxes, on goods imported from its neighbors, making these goods expensive for citizens to buy.

Today members of the EU work together toward shared economic goals. Many centripetal forces promote such economic cooperation. At the same time, centrifugal forces work against unity.

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 about what to buy. The elimination of tariffs on EU goods has lowered prices for EU consumers. The common market benefits workers as well. They are able to travel freely to other EU countries to find work.

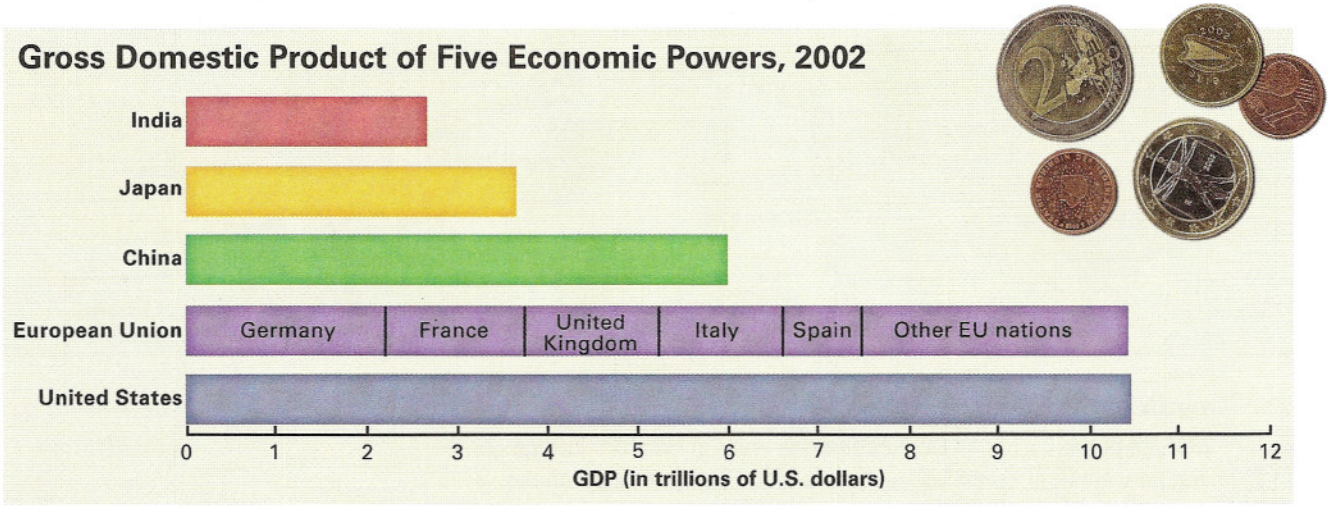
The adoption of a common currency in 2002 has also helped unite the EU. The common currency is called the **euro,** and in many EU countries, it has replaced the national currency. No longer do Europeans change money when they cross most borders. The euro makes it easier to travel and trade across the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

By joining their economies, EU members have also created a powerful **trade bloc**. A trade bloc is a group of countries that act together to increase their influence over world trade. 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.

EU countries share other economic goals. The EU 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.

The EU Trade Bloc

This graph compares the GDP of the EU to other large countries. GDP is the total value of goods and services produced in a place. By joining together, members of the EU trade bloc have far more economic power than they would have acting alone.



Source: *The World Factbook 2004,* Central Intelligence Agency.

Clay Bennett ©2002 Christian Science Monitor

Erasing EU Borders

In January 2002, the euro became the currency in 12 EU countries. About 291 million people traded in their old money for euros. To prepare for this change, banks were stocked with 12.5 billion new bills and 76 billion coins. According to this cartoon, what effect has the euro had on Europe?

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 see eye to eye 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 of money 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. Generally, workers in Western Europe are paid higher wages than those in Central and Eastern Europe. Living costs are higher in Western Europe as well. These factors have led some Western European businesses to move manufacturing 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 in Section 14.2, which shows which countries use the euro.)

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

The EU Headquarters
The EU government works on issues shared by member countries. Its headquarters is in Brussels, Belgium. In 2004, this was the center of government for more than 450 million people in 25 countries. Because of this, some might call Brussels the "capital of Europe."

14.4 Political Cooperation in the EU

Before the EU was formed, there were many political divisions among European countries. Each nation was independent, setting its own individual 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, in part through its common EU government. This government does not replace the governments of individual member countries. Rather, the EU government is supranational—it operates above the governments of its members. All member countries participate in the EU government.

How the EU Government Unites Europe The EU government works in two ways to unite Europe. First, it brings its members together to focus 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. European citizenship operates on top of citizenship of a home country, and gives individuals certain benefits. For example, citizens of member countries can live and work anywhere in the EU. They can also vote in EU elections. They have these rights no matter where they live in the EU.

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

The European Commission, the executive body of the EU government, is made up of commissioners appointed by member governments. The commission proposes new laws to the Council and Parliament, and handles the day-to-day business of carrying out EU policies. It also makes sure members abide by EU treaties and laws, taking rule-breakers to the EU's judicial branch, the Court of Justice, if needed.

The European Parliament is the largest EU body, with 700 members directly elected by citizens of EU countries. The main job of Parliament is to pass European laws, a task it shares with the Council. Parliament and Council also share the job of approving the EU budget. Together they determine how money should be spent on various 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.

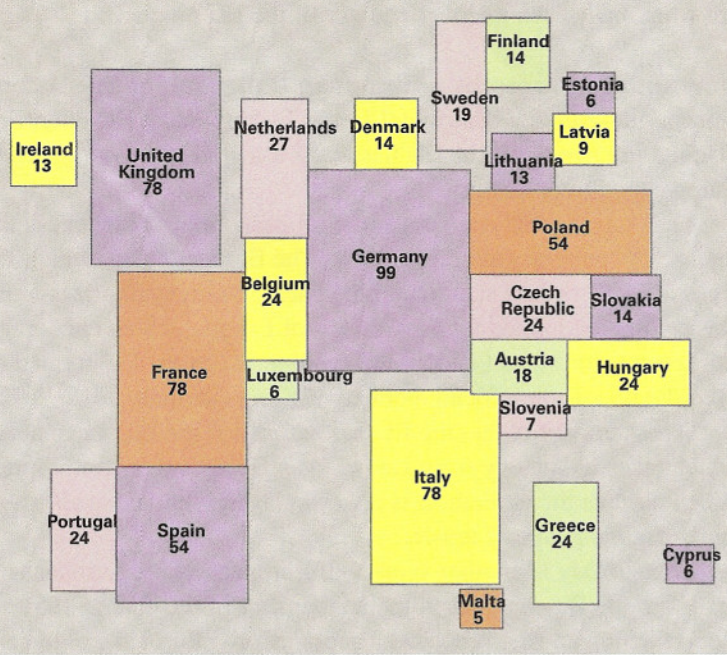
How the EU Government Divides Europe There are centrifugal forces at work as well in the EU government. When a country joins the European Union, it is expected to give up some power to the EU government. This means that the country must carry out EU decisions even if it does not agree with a given policy.

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—especially when they don't agree with EU decisions on these matters.

The growing size of the EU is also a centrifugal force. By 2004, the EU included more than 450 million people in 25 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 embrace. 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 not be worth the costs.



Representation in the European Parliament, 2005

The European Parliament is one of the main bodies of the EU government. The people of the EU elect its members. Elections are held every five years. Countries with more people have more representatives.

Europe Day in the EU
Celebrations and symbols help create a cultural identity. Every year on May 9, people celebrate Europe Day. The day honors Europe's "birthday." It was on this day in 1950 that Robert Schuman proposed creating a more united Europe. Symbols like the EU flag add to the feeling of a shared culture.

14.5 Cultural Cooperation in the EU

In the year 2000, students across the European Union took part in a contest to create a motto for the EU. These students sent in more than 2,000 possible mottos. After considering the students' ideas, the EU announced its choice in 2003: "United in Diversity."

The words in this motto are important. The goal of the EU is to unite Europeans to form an "ever closer union." Since the EU began, it has worked toward a common European **cultural identity**. At the same time, the EU recognizes the **diversity** of its members, and sees diversity as a strength. The word *diversity* refers to all the ways in which people are different from one another. Areas of diversity may include language, religion, ethnicity, beliefs, traditions, and values. These aspects of culture are what make each member country of the EU unique.

How the EU Promotes a European Cultural Identity A common cultural identity is a centripetal force. To help make EU countries "United in Diversity," the EU has made it a goal to encourage a common European cultural identity.

One way the EU encourages a European cultural identity is through the use of common cultural symbols. The European flag, which shows a circle of 12 yellow stars on a blue background, symbolizes unity. It was originally created by the Council of Europe, which encouraged all European institutions to adopt the symbol. When the EU formed, it also used the flag as the official emblem of European unity.

Another symbol that the EU has adopted is the European anthem, which takes its melody from Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. When used as the anthem, it is always played without words, in the "universal language of music."

Europe Day is another symbol of European unity. Europeans celebrate Europe Day on May 9, the anniversary of the date in 1950 when Robert Schuman first proposed a supranational European organization.

Europe Day has become a time for Europeans to come together to share and celebrate their common culture.

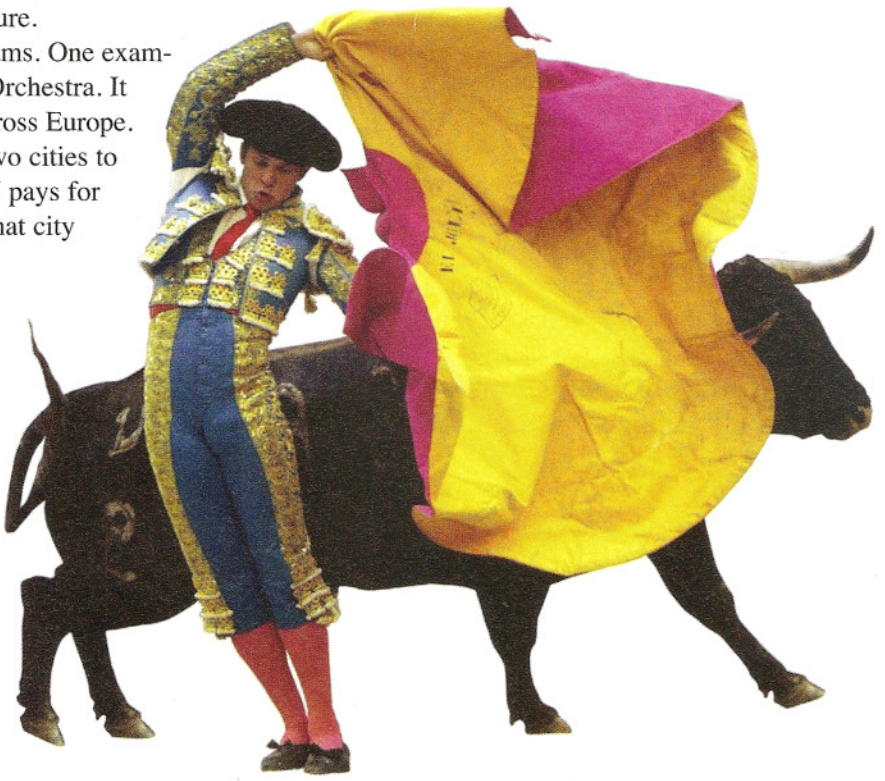
The EU also supports cultural programs. One example is the European Union Youth Wind Orchestra. It brings together young musicians from across Europe. Also, each year the EU chooses one or two cities to be European Capitals of Culture. The EU pays for special shows and events that highlight that city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

As you have read, EU passports and the euro make travel easy within the EU. As Europeans visit other EU 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 hard. To overcome the communication barrier, the EU must translate all of its speeches and documents into 20 languages. In 2004 alone, the EU had to translate more than 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!"



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.

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 centripetal 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.

14.7 Global Connections

The map shows international organizations in the world today. The countries in these organizations work together on common issues. The most truly international organization is the United Nations (UN). Its members include almost every country in the world.

What kinds of international organizations do countries join? Countries form many kinds of organizations. Some organizations work to promote the economic well-being of their members. The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) is a good example. Others bring nations together to defend themselves. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a defense organization.

Are all international organizations like the EU? The EU is the best example of a true supranational organization. Other organizations have more limited goals and powers. For example, NATO commits its members to defend one another. They promise to view an attack on one member as an attack on all. But NATO countries don't give up as much control of their individual affairs as EU nations do. The goal of NATO is defense more than unity.

What forces might work against supranational cooperation in the United Nations? The United Nations is the world's largest international organization. Its 191 member countries range in size from a few thousand to more than a billion people. Each has its own interests. For such diverse countries to cooperate, they must agree to put the world's interests above their own. This is often difficult or impossible for UN members to do. Sometimes their national interests seem in conflict with the interests of other countries.

The UN Headquarters

The United Nations was founded in 1945. Its goal is to promote peace and cooperation among the countries of the world. Member countries meet at the UN headquarters in New York City to discuss world issues.

The United Nations Flag

The UN flag shows a world map centered on the North Pole. Two olive branches frame the map. The world map represents all the people of the world, while the olive branch is a symbol for peace.