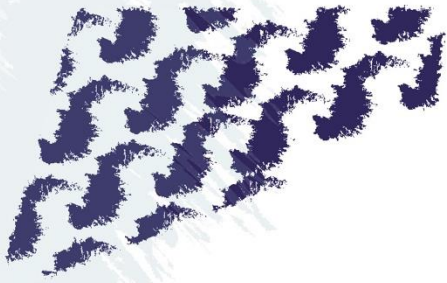


CULTURE is YOU



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Content Unit 2: Culture in Europe – then and now



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2 Culture in Europe – then and now

2.1 Introduction

Imagine that you work in a travel agency in any European country. Choose the two EU countries you know best and write some short notes about them for tourists. For example How many people live in these two countries and what is the capital? What do these countries have to offer visitors (food, culture, language, etc.)?

When you did this exercise, did you realise that each EU country has its own culture, language and traditions? Did you also find some similarities between these countries?

European culture is a term we often encounter in everyday life, but what does it really mean? In the media and in politics, Europe's cultural diversity is often praised. On the other hand, it is often emphasised that Europeans all belong to one culture - the European culture. But how can Europe be characterised by cultural diversity on the one hand and belong to the same European culture on the other? And where does this European culture come from? In this unit, we will take a closer look at these questions.

In this module you will learn about:

- the countries that make up the European Union
- different cultural directions of the European Union
- the main symbols of the European Union
- the outlines of the history of the European Union
- the importance of the European Union as a common institution
- the history of Austria, the Czech Republic, Spain and Poland
- the political criteria of the EU's states
- the economic criteria of the EU's states
- the *acquis* criterion for the EU countries
- the characteristics of Capitals of Culture and some examples
- the different people in the EU
- countries as immigration countries
- the diversity of cultures and countries as an enrichment

2.2 The European Union – our community

The European Union is a partnership of 27 European countries, and it is an economic and monetary union. The member states form a common economic area, and many of them share the Euro as their common currency.

But who is actually a member of the EU?



If you look at the map above, you can see different European countries, but some of them are not a member of the European Union. In the picture below you can see all the countries that make up the European Union:



Hint

In 2020 the United Kingdom decided to leave the EU in a national referendum and is therefore no longer part of the European Union.

The European Union has been growing for several decades with the accession of new member states. The EU and the euro are very attractive to countries that are still outside the Union. To become a candidate country, certain conditions must be met. Some examples are democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, no death penalty, equality, freedom of media and press. These values have been developed over many years and have shaped the society we live in today.

Example

When did some countries join the EU?

Spain: 1996

Austria: 1995

Czech Republic: 2004

Poland: 2004

Throughout history, European countries have always had overseas territories. This means that they had control over some parts that were not geographically located on the European continent. Some of these still exist today.

Excursion

Did you know that the EU has also regions which are not located on the European continent? They are known as **overseas territories** and those are French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion and Saint Martin (France), the Azores and Madeira (Portugal) and the Canary Islands (Spain).

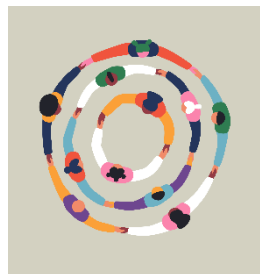
When you look at all the different countries that make up the European Union, it is clear that many different cultures come together. The motto of the European Union is '**united in diversity**', which means working for peace and prosperity, while also enriching the EU with different cultures, traditions and languages.

The EU promotes the idea that people with different cultures can benefit from each other and work well together. The EU is a community that clearly embraces its diversity and is committed to promoting and preserving it. Europe has 24 languages and many other dialects. Different cultures, landscapes, artistic expressions and much more make up a Europe of diversity. Europe's cultural heritage influences our daily lives. It surrounds us in our cities, in nature and at archaeological sites. We find it in literature, art and monuments, in the crafts we learn from our ancestors, in the food we eat and the films we watch. Cultural heritage is constructed and given meaning by people and therefore has social value. The value to society can be cultural, artistic, historical, archaeological or anthropological. If you think of all the different countries that make up the EU and their different cultural orientations, you can imagine the dimension of cultural diversity that exists in Europe.

Remember

The totality of the customs, values and habits of the individual peoples in Europe, and the coexistence of the different cultures is what constitutes Europe's culture and distinguishes it from the rest of the world.

Surely you have come across **symbols of the EU** in your daily life - which of the following do you know? Let's explore some of them.



When you have a look at the symbols above you might imagine that they are all parts of the European Union. Let's have a short look at the most important symbols of the EU.

European Flag: It symbolizes the European Union and the identity and unity of Europe.

Europe Day: Europe Day takes place every year on the 9th of May. It is the anniversary of the historic "Schuman Declaration" and celebrates peace and unity in Europe.

European Anthem: Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" has been the official EU anthem since 1985 and is without lyrics.

EU motto: Since the year 2000 the EU motto is "United in diversity".

The Euro: The euro is a tangible sign of European identity. It is the official currency of 20 EU countries which comprise the Eurozone.

2.3 The European Union – how it all began and why it is so important

How did the European Union emerge? The growth of the EU took a couple of decades.

After the Second World War, Europe lay in ruins. This terrible record led many European leaders to the same conclusion: Never again war! It soon became clear that the only way to secure lasting peace in Europe was through greater economic and political cooperation. The decisive impetus for the peaceful unification of Europe came from the rivals of the two world wars - Germany and France. The box below shows how the EU has developed over time.

Important

History of the European Union

1957: Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg, and the Netherlands found the European Economic Community (EEC).

1973: Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark join the European Community (EC).

1981: Greece joins the EC.

1986: Spain and Portugal join the EC.

1995: Austria, Sweden and Finland join the European Union (EU).

2004: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus join the EU.

2007: Bulgaria and Romania join the EU.

2013: Croatia becomes the 28th member state of the EU.

2016: Most of the United Kingdom's population votes to leave the EU. After long and very complicated exit negotiations, the exit takes place in 2020.

You may have noticed the difference between EEC, EC and EU in the box above. The purpose of the EEC was to abolish customs and create a common economic market. The **Maastricht Treaty** came into force in 1992. With the creation of the European Union, the EEC was renamed the EC (European Community). The renaming made it clear that it was no longer just about economics. As you have seen, the EU has been gradually enlarged by the accession of different countries. But what does this mean for each country, and what do you think has changed for citizens? Let's look at an example.

Example

What changed for citizens after joining the European Union?

By joining the EU, all citizens received EU citizenship. Citizenship of the Union should not be seen as a substitute for national citizenship, but rather as a complement to it:

- The right to move freely within the EU area.
- The right to vote in local elections in another member state even without citizenship if one has a residence in the state in question.
- The right to vote for the European Parliament.
- If EU citizens get into difficulties while travelling in non-EU countries, they can turn to the embassies of all member states for protection and assistance.

Let's see some examples which might be outcomes of the EU. Think about those and reflect for yourself what they mean to you and if you agree with them.

Practical Relevance

- One weakness is the EU's vast bureaucracy
- We can work in many European countries just as we do at home
- Flying has become much cheaper
- Travelling in Europe has become much easier – there are no more border controls between a lot of countries
- There is no single language in Europe
- Telephone calls have become much cheaper in recent years

The European Union is an important construction as a common institution, why is it so important that the members of the EU work together?

The EU wants to act as a closed economic area with a common currency: They form a common market, also called the single market. The prerequisite for this is the abolition of all borders in economic life. The most important principle is non-discrimination: people, companies and goods from other countries must not be treated less favourably than domestic ones.

Example

Importance of the EU as a common institution

Cohesion makes it possible for states to support each other. For example, during the 2009 financial crisis, states helped each other, and rescue packages are provided for economically weak member states.

In times of crisis, such as the Corona pandemic, the EU provides mutual assistance and solidarity.

The EU has been working intensively together and developing common goals, which are important for the existence and functioning of the institution. Remember the following goals.

Remember

The goals of the EU are:

- Peace
- Customs union
- One big market (internal market)
- A common currency
- A common foreign and security policy
- Cooperation in the fields of justice and police
- Reduction of economic disparities between member states, support for poorer regions

In this sense also remember the four fundamental freedoms of the EU:

Freedom of movement of persons Every person in an EU state has the right to spend his life in any EU state (live, work, buy property, study, ...).	Freedom of movement of goods Every person/business in an EU state has the right to sell goods produced in one EU state to other EU states.
Freedom to provide services Every person/company from an EU state has the right to offer their services in all other EU states.	Freedom of movement of capital Every person/company in an EU state has the right to invest their capital in any other EU state without restriction.

2.4 The European Union – what unites us

The enlargement of the European Union has been a much debated issue in recent years.

Which countries belong to Europe culturally and geographically? Which countries are economically ready to join the EU? Will the EU be able to cope with the next enlargement? To join the EU, a country must fulfil the Copenhagen criteria. The accession negotiations cover several chapters such as taxation, transport policy and competition law.

Important

Copenhagen criteria:

In 1993, at a meeting in Copenhagen, the EU formulated criteria for possible accession countries:

Political criteria: The state must be a democracy, respect human rights and protect minorities located in the country. The actions of political institutions must not be arbitrary but must be based on law.

Economic criteria: The state must have a functioning market economy that can cope with competition within the EU.

Legal criterion (acquis criterion, Acquis Communautaire): The state must comply with the obligations arising from EU membership - EU law and EU policy - and embrace the objectives of the European Union.

Without exception, the Copenhagen criteria must be met by all potential candidates. Let's demonstrate it with the potential membership candidate Turkey.

Example

Candidate country Turkey

A recent example of a new candidate for EU membership is Turkey. Turkey has been an official candidate country since 1999. Negotiations for Turkey's accession to the EU began in 2005. The road to the EU is rocky for Turkey, as it must meet the Copenhagen criteria. During the rapprochement process, Turkey initially made great progress: the death penalty was abolished and the influence of the military on politics was reduced. In recent years, however, there have been repeated signs of estrangement between Turkey and the EU. The EU has criticised Turkey for imposing too many restrictions on freedom of expression and the press. There has also been no improvement in fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law. Under these circumstances, the EU Parliament cannot justify at this stage changing its position on the formal suspension of accession negotiations with Turkey, which have been at a virtual standstill since 2018.

Now reflect on yourself. Which criteria according to you should states fulfil to join the European Union? Make your decision for the following criteria and discuss it with a friend.

Criteria for EU Membership	Fully agree	Partially agree	Partially disagree	Disagree
The state shall have a democratic constitution				
The state must banish the death penalty				
The state must fulfil international climate protection goals				
The state must introduce the Euro as a currency				
Most of the citizens shall be Christians				

Hint

Now there are currently eight official candidate states. These are Ukraine, Turkey, Serbia, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania.

Of course, you know the capitals of most European capitals. For example, Vienna is the capital of Austria or Madrid is the capital of Spain. Maybe you have also already heard the term "Cultural Capital"? Have you ever thought about which cities are cultural capitals?

Before we move on to the next chapter, let us take a look at the Capitals of Culture. In 2023, three European cities will be able to claim the title of European Capital of Culture. Veszprém

in Hungary, Eleusis in Greece and Timisoara in Romania. But what exactly are Capitals of Culture?

Remember

The title of European Capital of Culture was first awarded in 1985 to the city of Athens. Selected cities become European Capitals of Culture for a period of one year. The award is given to cities that make their cultural distinctiveness tangible through participatory and sustainable approaches. The title has been awarded to more than 60 cities across Europe. The aim is to highlight cultural diversity, put the spotlight on the cultural scene of the selected cities and stimulate their long-term development.

Do you want to inform yourself about the program of some cultural capitals? Each cultural capital has its own website, where you can get further information.

Hint

You can visit websites of cultural capital on the internet. Here are some examples:

European Capital of Culture 2024: Bad Ischl – Salzkammergut, Austria

<https://www.salzkammergut-2024.at>

European Capital of Culture 2016: San Sebastián, Spain

<https://www.sansebastian2016.eu/>

European Capital of Culture 2016: Breslau, Poland

<http://www.wroclaw2016.strefakultury.pl/>

European Capital of Culture 2015: Pilsen, Czech Republic

<https://www.depo2015.cz/o-nas-ag65/plzen-2015-a952>

2.5 What is my culture?

When you think about your culture, you might also think about your identity as a European. European identity - what does it mean? Both Europe and identity are difficult concepts to grasp. Is it the identity of an individual or that of a nation or a continent? And isn't identity a constantly changing concept? Does Europe mean the geographical borders or primarily the member states of the EU? The motto "United in diversity" is one of the symbols of the EU. It was developed to reinforce the idea of a European identity. The motto is meant to express that Europeans are united through the EU for prosperity and peace and that the different cultures and languages within Europe are an enrichment for the whole continent.

Example

Diversity in Europe

When you think about Scandinavians and Greeks you might say that both cultures differ in many ways. Yet both are Europeans. There it is no coincidence that the European motto is "United in diversity". "Unity" means peace and a social market economy for Europe. "Diversity" you can find in traditions, dialects, languages and minorities.

There are many benefits to cultural diversity. It promotes openness between different groups of people and breaks down negative stereotypes. Multiculturalism makes our society a more interesting place to live. Every culture has its own values, beliefs and interests, which provide an interesting insight into alternative ways of doing things. People from different cultures give us different insights into food, language, music, art, religion, etc.

Europe can also be seen as a continent of immigration. When it comes to immigration, European countries are often in competition with each other. Within the EU it is possible to move freely, so many people from economically weak countries with few opportunities on the labour market want to emigrate to countries such as Germany or Austria. These countries offer better opportunities on the labour market due to their economic stability.

Migrants often have a different first language, a different culture or religion, and sometimes a different physical appearance. Migration within a region is called internal migration. For example, migration within the EU. The main reasons for internal migration are better working conditions and better educational opportunities.

If you think about the lifestyle of your parents or even of people 100 years ago, you will surely agree that the way of life is no longer the same. This is due to cultural change. Cultural change describes the way in which a society changes over time. Let's explore this phenomenon.

Europe is diverse. The EU, as an alliance of states, is the living space of many Europeans. Since its foundation and with the gradual accession of new states, new borders have been created in Europe. Most recently, the EU has undergone significant change with the eastward enlargement to include Central and Eastern European countries. With the application of new candidate countries, the question of where Europe ends is being asked anew. As the EU changes and develops, so does culture. Cultural change is constantly influenced by the environment, technological inventions, a society's experiences and contact with other cultures. Cultures can be influenced by contacts between societies, which also lead to social changes and changes in cultural practices.

Example

Cultural changes

Aesthetics: Taste changes with time as new styles appear and people imitate them. For example, changing fashion trends.

Technology: The development of mobile phones led to a change in cultural norms. It became normal that phone calls could be done from everywhere not just from home. Also, texting is widely used as a method for an on-the-go conversation.

Design: Changes in design impact culture. For example, the urban design of cities has an impact on how communities interact, such as a city with many parks, public spaces and café terraces.

2.6 Summary

In this Content Unit, you have learned the basics of culture in Europe, with a **special focus on the European Union**. The EU is an institution made up of **27 member states** and the motto 'united in diversity' is a key element of European culture.

The EU, as we know it today, was created by the **Maastricht Treaty in 1992**. Being a member of the EU brings many benefits and influences our daily lives. For example, it is possible to move freely within the EU. Because of the many benefits of the European Union, many countries want to become EU members. To become a member there are certain requirements that must be met, such as democracy or the protection of human rights. All the requirements to become part of the EU are listed in the **Copenhagen criteria**.

As well as historical facts and figures, you have learnt about the richness of cultural diversity in Europe and that culture is not static but is constantly changing.

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