Europe Day

Europe Day is celebrated across Europe every year on May 9th. It celebrates peace and co-operation amongst European countries. This date was chosen as Europe Day as it was the day, in the year 1950, that the French foreign minister, Robert Schuman, made a speech about improving the relationship between European countries. He suggested the creation of an organisation called the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

It was hoped that European countries would work together to combine their industries and improve each other's economies, thus reducing the chance of war between countries and leading to an increasingly united Europe. It was primarily aimed at repairing the relationship between France and Germany, following the years of destruction brought about by the Second World War.

In 1951, a year after Schuman's speech, the ECSC was finally established. It brought together the founding members of Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. It was the first European organisation of its kind and paved the way for further European cooperation, leading ultimately to what is now the European Union (EU).

The next step towards the creation of the EU was the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC), also known as the Common Market, in 1957. The United Kingdom, along with Ireland and Denmark, joined the EEC in 1973. Along with the founding members of the ECSC, the EEC now had a total of 9 member states.

The European Union was eventually established in 1993 with many more European countries becoming members. It allowed for easier trade and movement between member states and even resulted in a shared currency, the Euro, between some of its members. The EU was, however, not without its problems. There have been many disagreements over the years about European laws, the expansion of EU membership and the financial costs of being part of the EU. The United Kingdom voted to leave the EU in 2016.

Europe Day is celebrated in many different ways across Europe. Many EU buildings hold open days to teach people about what the EU does. In the past, there have been opportunities for the public to experience the job of being an EU interpreter or to play a game where you can manage the EU budgets. Debates have also been held which the public have been invited to take part in.

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Across Europe, festivals are held with concerts celebrating different European music and food fairs celebrating the diversity of food across Europe. Many schools spend the day learning about other European countries or about the EU or even link up with other schools from different countries to share their knowledge and culture. Specific annual events such as The Schuman Parade are held on or around Europe Day. The Schuman Parade is held in the streets of Warsaw, Poland, every year to celebrate Poland's membership of the EU and the annual Europe Day Fair is held in Lithuania, with works of art, music and food available.

Questions

1. When is Europe Day celebrated? Why is it celebrated on this particular day?

2. Why was the ECSC created?

3. Who were the founding members of the ECSC and what do you think the word 'founding' means in this context?

4. What is another name for the EEC and when did the UK join it?

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5. What benefits do members of the EU enjoy?

6. Do all EU members use the Euro? What word in the passage tells you this?

7. Why do you think there have been disagreements within the EU?

8. What special events have been organised in the past by EU organisations? Do you think this a good way to learn about the EU? Why?

9. How is Europe Day celebrated across Europe?

10. Why do you think some countries celebrate Europe Day more than others?