

Reactions in Italy

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Reaction in Italy to the Schuman Plan was generally favourable. Alcide De Gasperi, the Prime Minister, even displayed overt enthusiasm. The Plan did indeed provide Italy with the opportunity to return at last to the international scene on an equal footing with those countries which had defeated it in war.

At economic level, however, Italy's weak heavy industry sector still required protectionist policies. On the other hand, the processing industry, and the car industry in particular, was convinced of the benefit of a plan that could make it easier to obtain raw materials. The nationalised steel industry also saw the Plan as a means to ensure the necessary modernisation of its machinery. Italy even negotiated a separate plan with France for the supply of iron ore from the overseas territories in North Africa that France did not want to include in the ECSC. Public opinion shared this trust in the Plan and understood the political and economic advantages that the Italian State could derive from the implementation of the Schuman Plan. However, Italy requested, and was accorded, a transitional period to allow it to adapt to new levels of international competition.