

Reservations expressed by France and other Member States

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Negotiations with Spain and Portugal proved difficult because several Member States of the European Economic Community (EEC) felt that their economic interests were directly threatened by certain products from Southern Europe. Against a general background of economic recession, France and Italy, in particular, expressed serious reservations about Spain's accession because they feared that Spanish agricultural produce would flood the European market, which was already threatened by its own surplus production. In 1977, almost half of Spanish exports found an outlet in the European Common Market. The Nine also feared that Spanish and Portuguese membership would increase the regional disparities within the Community. They were also concerned that the free movement of workers would lead large numbers of unemployed Spanish and Portuguese citizens to leave their own countries in search of work in neighbouring countries.