

The issues surrounding the establishment of a common market

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The issues surrounding the establishment of a common market

The common market aimed to create in Europe a huge geographical area with a common economic policy, which, by merging national markets, could eliminate wastage of resources. The removal of obstacles to free competition and the promise of new sales outlets would enable production to be increased. Implementation of a general common market posed major challenges, however, for the economies of traditionally protectionist countries like France. Indeed, the customs union proposed by the six Member States of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) entailed the elimination of quotas and tariff barriers and the adoption of a common rate of customs duty.

- [Address given by Pierre-Henri Teitgen to the French National Assembly on the advantages of a European Common Market \(Paris, 15 January 1957\)](#)
- [Cartoon by W. Hicks on the fears engendered by the Rome Treaties in Europe \(28 February 1957\)](#)
- ['Is the Common Market an opportunity or a risk?' from Énergie \(March 1957\)](#)

There was wide disagreement about the procedures for implementing the common market. Germany and the three Benelux countries, whose economies depended heavily on exports, favoured economic liberalism and wanted a reduction in customs duties and a low common external tariff. France and Italy, whose economies appeared less competitive, were primarily in favour of mechanisms for market regulation and a certain amount of external protection. France, however, was also concerned about the future of its relations with its African colonies, and called for their inclusion in the future European common market.

The Six were unable to resolve the question of a possible common agricultural policy in a way which satisfied everybody; instead, they simply opted for a common European organisation of the markets once a transitional phase had expired. The treaty nonetheless provided for improvement in productivity, self-sufficiency in food for the Six and the fixing of an adequate income for farmers.

- ['The road to the Common Market is a thorny path' from Die Zeit \(7 February 1957\)](#)

The trade unions in Europe played a particularly active role in the Val Duchesse negotiations. The future common market would have the task of harmonising social conditions and promoting workers' interests via full employment and workforce mobility. It should have the effect of re-establishing or stimulating healthy competition within the European economy by encouraging a rational division of labour and creating the conditions essential to mass production. The trade unions also emphasised the importance of social harmonisation in the future EEC.

- [Cartoon by Nitro on employers and the European Common Market \(24 January 1957\)](#)