

The common transport market

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The Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) provided for a common policy for transport by road, rail and inland waterway. This policy was designed to assist the free movement of goods, services and persons and, finally, achieve a Europe without internal frontiers. The first initiative was the harmonisation of tariffs and taxation. However, no detailed timetable was laid down in the Treaty.

The differences in terms of transport between the Six were still quite considerable, largely because of their individual geographical features. Whereas France gave preference to rail, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany, on the other hand, promoted inland waterway and road transport. The Member States were also unwilling to give up certain prerogatives in the transport sector, which was of prime economical and social importance. The transport policy also affected other sensitive sectors such as the environment, energy and regional development. Under these conditions, it proved very difficult to find any middle ground and draw up a genuine common transport policy. Accordingly, the Community had to be content with a few measures laying down rules on competition in this sector.