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Frontmatter
More information

This volume re-examines the topic of economic growth in Europe after the Second World War. The contributors approach the subject armed not only with new theoretical ideas, but also with the experience of the 1980s on which to draw. The analysis is based on both applied economics and economic history. Thus, while the volume is greatly informed by insights from growth theory, emphasis is given to the presentation of chronological and institutional detail. The case study approach and the adoption of a longer-run perspective than is normal for economists, allow new insights to be obtained.

Individual chapters cover Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and the UK. Further chapters explore general European institutional arrangements and historical circumstances. The result is a genuinely comparative picture of postwar growth, with insights that do not emerge from standard cross-section regressions based on the post-1960 period.

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Frontmatter
More information

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More information

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NICHOLAS CRAFTS

and

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Frontmatter
More information

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

Contents

List of figures *page* xii
List of tables xv
Preface xxi
List of contributors xxiii

1 Postwar growth: an overview 1
Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
1 Introduction 1
2 Main trends in postwar European growth 2
3 Previous interpretations of European postwar growth 8
4 Recent developments in growth theory 14
5 Europe's postwar growth in a long-run perspective: some quantitative aspects 16
6 The years of high growth 20
7 Slowdown and instability 25
8 Factors in the performance of individual countries 27
9 Concluding comments 31

2 Institutions and economic growth: Europe after World War II 38
Barry Eichengreen
1 Introduction 38
2 The model 43
3 The structure of domestic institutions 45
4 The evolution of domestic institutions 50
5 The structure of international institutions 53
6 The decline of the postwar settlement 58
7 Conclusion 65

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

3 The varieties of Eurosclerosis: the rise and decline of nations since 1982 73
Mancur Olson
1 Introduction 73
2 A recapitulation of the theory 74
3 Economic growth since *Rise and Decline* 78
4 Distinctive institutions and common processes 81
5 Distinctive institutions and inescapable logic 91

4 Why the 1950s and not the 1920s? Olsonian and non-Olsonian interpretations of two decades of German economic history 95
Karl-Heinz Paqué
1 Introduction 95
2 An Olsonian interpretation of the two postwar records 96
3 A non-Olsonian mode of interpretation 100

5 Convergence, competitiveness and the exchange rate 107
Andrea Boltho
1 Introduction 107
2 Competitiveness and the exchange rate 108
3 Western Europe in the 'Golden Age' 110
4 Country experience 116
5 Conclusions 124
Statistical appendix 126

6 British economic growth since 1945: relative economic decline . . . and renaissance? 131
Charles Bean and Nicholas Crafts
1 Introduction 131
2 The legacy of the 1930s and World War II 138
3 Reconstruction 140
4 The Golden Age 142
5 Shocks and stagflation 147
6 Recovery in the 1980s and its legacy 149
7 Bargaining models and productivity change 153
8 Human capital formation 158
9 Deindustrialization 159
10 Conclusions 160
Appendix 162

7 Economic growth in postwar Belgium 173
Isabelle Cassiers, Philippe De Villé and Peter M. Solar
1 Introduction 173
2 Postwar economic growth: main features, structures and institutions, initial conditions 174
3 The phases of postwar economic growth 180
4 Structural change and the control of industry 198
5 Conclusion 201

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

8 France, 1945–92 210
Pierre Sicsic and Charles Wyplosz
1 Introduction 210
2 Aggregate performance 211
3 The legacy of the 1930s and reconstruction 217
4 The 'vingt glorieuses' (1954–76) 219
5 Shocks and stagflation in the 1970s 223
6 A partial recovery 226
7 Human capital 229
8 Institutions 232
9 Conclusion 236

9 Economic growth and the Swedish model 240
Magnus Henrekson, Lars Jonung and Joakim Stymne
1 Introduction 240
2 Aggregate performance 242
3 A review of macroeconomic policies 252
4 Ultimate causes of Swedish economic performance 256
5 Conclusions 280

10 Characteristics of economic growth in the Netherlands during the postwar period 290
Bart van Ark, Jakob de Haan and Herman J. de Jong
1 Introduction 290
2 The major facts 292
3 The legacy of the 1930s 301
4 World War II and the reconstruction years 302
5 The 'golden years' from 1950 to 1973 305
6 Shocks and sluggish growth during the 1970s 309
7 Continuity and change during the 1980s 311
8 Labour market and wage policies 312
9 The performance of the export sector and exchange rate policy 315
10 The public sector and economic growth 317
11 Conclusions 322

11 Portuguese postwar growth: a global approach 329
João L. César das Neves
1 Introduction 329
2 Postwar growth: the setting 329
3 Postwar growth: the phases 335
4 Some particular themes 346
5 Conclusions 352

12 Growth and macroeconomic performance in Spain, 1939–93 355
Leandro Prados de la Escosura and Jorge C. Sanz
1 Introduction 355
2 Spain's economic performance in the long run 355

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

3 The legacy of the 1930s and the Civil War (1936–9) 361
4 Reconstruction: Spain under autarky, 1939–59 362
5 The Golden Age: years of accelerated growth, 1959–75 369
6 Shocks and stagflation: the transition from dictatorship to democracy, 1975–85 372
7 Recovery of the late 1980s and its legacy: the integration of Spain into the EEC 375
8 Concluding remarks 378

13 Irish economic growth, 1945–88 388
Cormac ÓGráda and Kevin O'Rourke
1 Introduction 388
2 Irish growth and the economic convergence debate 389
3 Irish economic history, 1945–92 398
4 Investment 404
5 Human capital and emigration 407
6 Trade policies 409
7 Rent seeking and interest groups: the political economy of growth 413
8 Some simple cross-section evidence 416
9 Conclusion 419

14 Italy 427
Nicola Rossi and Gianni Toniolo
1 Introduction 427
2 The aggregate performance: an overview 428
3 Total factor productivity, market structure, scale economies and capacity utilization 430
4 The legacy of Fascism and the war 438
5 Setting the stage: reconstruction and stabilization 439
6 An 'economic miracle'? 441
7 The roots of the malaise, 1963–73 442
8 Productivity slowdown, 1973–92 445
9 Concluding remarks 449
Appendix 450

15 West German growth and institutions, 1945–90 455
Wendy Carlin
1 Introduction 455
2 The growth weakness of the Weimar Republic 460
3 Reconstruction, 1945–61 463
4 Golden Age growth, 1961–73 468
5 Slow growth, 1973–90 473
6 Is there a West German economic model and, if so, has it affected growth? 482
7 West German growth – what does it tell us about the prospects for growth in East Germany? 489

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

16 An exercise in futility: East German economic growth and decline, 1945–89 498
Albrecht O. Ritschl
1 Introduction 498
2 Macroeconomic performance: a brief overview 499
3 The legacy of the 1930s and the war: how bad a start? 504
4 The productivity gap in the making, 1945–50 508
5 East Germany's transition to Communism: a brief review 511
6 The 1950s: an East German *Wirtschaftswunder*? 513
7 2 fast 4 you: frustrated catching up, the Berlin Wall and attempted reform during the 1960s 517
8 The Golden Seventies: a belated *Wirtschaftswunder*? 519
9 The road to bankruptcy, 1980–9 522
10 The aftermath of unification 528
11 Conclusion 532

17 Postwar growth of the Danish economy 541
Peder J. Pedersen
1 Introduction 541
2 The aggregate growth performance: an overview 543
3 The legacy from the 1930s and the war and reconstruction years 551
4 Growth factors and sectoral shifts in the postwar years 554
5 Growth and economic policy since 1950 563
6 Concluding comments 570

18 Reflections on the country studies 576
Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
1 Introduction 576
2 The idea of a 'Golden Age' 577
3 The accumulation of capital and the acquisition of knowledge 578
4 The impact of economic policy 579
5 Growth economics 580

Index 582

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

Figures

1.1 Trend growth of real output per person in Italy, 1870–1990 *page* 17
2.1 Initial (1950) GDP per man-hour and growth, 1950–73 39
2.2 Wartime and postwar (1938–50) change in GDP per man-hour and growth, 1950–73 39
2.3 Investment share and growth rates of GDP: 16 countries, 1950–89 40
2.4 Growth rates of GDP and exports: 16 countries, 1950–89 42
5.1 Effective and real exchange rate: Germany, 1950–70 115
5.2 Effective and real exchange rate: Italy, 1950–70 115
5.3 Effective and real exchange rate: France, 1950–70 116
5.4 Effective and real exchange rate: Spain, 1950–70 117
7.1 Sectoral growth rates of output: Belgium, 1953–86 185
7.2 Sectoral growth rates of capital formation: Belgium, 1953–86 185
7.3 Sectoral employment: Belgium, 1953–86 186
7.4 Sectoral shares of wages in value added: Belgium, 1953–85 189
7.5 Relative value-added prices, sheltered sector/open sector: Belgium, 1953–86 191
7.6 Indices of competitiveness: Belgium, 1969–91 192
7.7 Net financial need of the government as a share of GDP: Belgium, 1953–93 194
7.8 Labour force, employment capacity and actual employment: Belgium, 1953–88 196
8.1 GDP: France and Germany, 1950–92 213
8.2 Unemployment rates, 1973–93 215
8.3 Real franc exchange rate, 1949–92 216
8.4 Investment rate: France, 1890–1984 218
8.5 Factor reallocations 224
8.6 Inflation and unemployment: EU and France, 1971–92 225
8.7 Investment rates and non-wage share in national income: France, 1949–92 226
8.8 GDP growth rates: selected countries, 1974–83 227

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

8.9 Real consumer wages: France, 1946–91 228
9.1 Industrial production in Sweden and OECD, 1960–92 249
9.2 Annual percentage changes in Swedish GDP and the Swedish business cycle, 1945–90 250
9.3 Structure of Swedish employment, 1945–91 252
9.4 Private and public sector gross saving as a percentage of GDP: Sweden, 1950–92 259
9.5 Swedish capital formation by category, 1950–92 261
9.6 The competitive and sheltered sectors of the Swedish economy, 1952–90 263
9.7 Cumulative changes of public and private employment in Sweden, 1960–93 267
9.8 Public employment as a share of total employment in Sweden, 1950–93 269
9.9 GDP and taxation in Sweden, 1950–93 271
9.10 Average hourly wages for blue-collar workers in Swedish manufacturing, 1990: II 276
10.1 Growth rates of real GNP in the Netherlands and the world trade volume, 1951–94 316
11.1 GDP per capita relative to Portugal, average, 1950–90 333
11.2 Log per-capita output, HP trend and subperiods, 1945–91 336
12.1 Spain's real GDP per head: comparative performance, 1850–1993 357
12.2 Rate of inflation: Spain, 1929–93 364
12.3 Relative price of capital goods: Spain, 1950–90 365
12.4 Budget balance of central government and public administrations: Spain, 1940–93 366
12.5 Current account balance: Spain, 1940–93 367
12.6 Employment, labour force and the rate of unemployment: Spain, 1955–93 372
13.1 GDP per capita indices: Ireland, 1950–88 392
13.2 GDP per capita, initial level and growth: Europe, 1950–88 393
13.3 GNP per capita, initial level and growth: Europe, 1979–88 394
13.4 GDP per worker, initial level and growth: Europe, 1950–88 396
13.5 GDP per employed worker, initial level and growth: Europe, 1964–88 397
13.6 Investment shares: Ireland, UK and the rest of Europe, 1950–88 405
13.7 Equipment share and price: Europe, 1960–85 406
14.1 TFP levels: Italy, 1938–90 434
14.2 Profitability: Italy, 1938–90 436
14.3 Market power: Italy, 1938–90 436
14.4 Scale economies: Italy, 1938–90 437
14.5 Capacity utilization: Italy, 1938–90 437
14.6 Inequality and poverty: Italy, 1973–91 449
15.1 Manufacturing productivity levels, 1950–89 458
15.2 Profitability and capital accumulation in manufacturing: Germany, 1951–90 471
17.1 Log GNP per capita: Denmark, 1890–1990 543

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

17.2 Growth in real GNP: Denmark, 1946–91 544
17.3 Change in aggregate real GNP per employed person: Denmark, 1949–91 547
17.4 Change in hourly productivity of labour, manufacturing industry: Denmark, 1949–91 547
17.5 Annual change in total factor productivity: Denmark, 1967–91 549
17.6 Factor quality corrected estimates of TFP change in sheltered and exposed sectors: Denmark, 1967–89 550
17.7 Gross investments to output ratio, aggregate economy: Denmark, 1948–91 555
17.8 Relative change in machine capital per employed person: Denmark, 1949–91 555
17.9 Relative price and output share of machinery investments: Denmark, 1948–91 556
17.10 Aggregate export and import ratios: Denmark, 1948–91 558
17.11 Total taxes relative to GNP: Denmark, 1948–91 562
17.12 Sector GDP deflators relative to aggregate GDP deflator: agriculture, manufacturing industry and private service industries in Denmark, 1948–91 562
17.13 Relative price between sheltered and exposed sectors: Denmark, 1948–91 563
17.14 Rate of unemployment: Denmark, 1948–91 564
17.15 Rate of increase in nominal and real wages: Denmark, 1949–91 565
17.16 Ratio between user cost of capital and industrial wages: Denmark, 1955–91 567

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

Tables

1.1 European growth, 1890–1992 *page* 2
1.2 War damage and reconstruction 4
1.3 GDP per person growth in Eastern Europe 5
1.4 GDP per person in 1990 international dollars 6
1.5 Unemployment rates 7
1.6 Differences in the sources of growth 9
1.7 TFP growth in different periods 10
1.8 Demand fluctuations and growth 11
1.9 Income elasticities of demand for exports 13
1.10 Estimated trend rates of growth of output per person in different periods 16
1.11 Using the Levine–Renelt model to account for changes in European growth of output per head 18
1.12 Comparative levels of labour productivity in manufacturing 21
1.13 Actual and forecast convergence, 1950–86/7 28
1.14 Growth performance and its sources relative to the European average: an analysis based on Levine–Renelt 29
1.15 Some new growth variables 31
2.1 Intra-European trade: percentage liberalized at selected dates 59
5.1 Indicators of European competitiveness, 1950 113
5.2 Selected indicators of European competitiveness, 1920s and 1950 114
5.3 Changes in selected macroeconomic indicators: Germany and Italy, selected dates 119
5.4 Indices of revealed comparative advantage: Germany and Italy, selected dates 119
5.5 Trade liberalization in OEEC countries, 1952–8 121
5.6 Changes in selected macroeconomic indicators: France and Spain, selected dates 121
5.7 Indices of revealed comparative advantage: France and Spain, selected dates 122

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

5.8 Indicators of foreign trade changes: France and Spain 123
6.1 Growth of real output per head and productivity, 1950–89 133
6.2 Estimates of comparative levels of productivity, 1950–89 134
6.3 Differences in the sources of growth, 1950–87 135
6.4 Levine and Renelt accounting for UK growth shortfall, 1960–73 136
6.5 Some comparisons relating to investment 137
6.6 Inflation and unemployment: UK, 1950–89 138
6.7 National debt, money supply and balance of payments: UK, selected dates 139
6.8 Growth rates of output, capital stock and TFP: UK, selected dates 139
6.9 Revealed comparative advantage rankings: UK and USA, selected dates 140
6.10 The short-term UK macroeconomic position, 1948 and 1951 141
6.11 Research and development and patenting, 1938–89 144
6.12 Labour force with intermediate vocational qualifications, 1979 and 1988 144
6.13 Labour productivity comparisons in international companies: reasons for differentials, 1972 145
6.14 Productivity outcomes in UK nationalized/privatized sector, selected dates 149
6.15 Productivity of labour in manufacturing, 1987: sources of German lead over UK 152
6.16 Panel regressions of total factor productivity growth in British industry 155
6.17 Value added in high-technology industry, 1979 and 1988 160
7.1 Major growth indicators: Belgium and north-west Europe, 1913–90 175
7.2 Final demand growth: Belgium, 1953–86 186
7.3 Sectoral cost, price and productivity growth: Belgium, 1953–86 189
8.1 Aggregate performance: France, 1950–92 212
8.2 Ratio of variances: France relative to other countries 214
8.3 Ratio of variances: France relative to other countries 214
8.4 Capital growth: France, 1930–58 217
8.5 TFP growth by industries, and relative prices of value added: France, 1950–92 220
8.6 Accounting decomposition of TFP growth: France, 1950–92 223
8.7 Estimates by Maddison (1987) of the effect of education on growth: France and Germany, 1973–84 230
8.8 Highest degree obtained and unemployment rate: Germany and France, 1989 231
8.9 Proportion of employees without degree according to relative earnings: France, 1970 and 1985 232
8.10 Credit outstanding in France, 1956 233
8.11 Share of French exports by destination, 1952–84 235
9.1 Growth in GDP per man-hour in 16 OECD countries, 1870–1970 242

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

9.2 Growth in GDP per man-hour in 16 OECD countries, 1950–70 243
9.3 Average annual growth rate of GDP, GDP per person employed and GDP per capita, 1950–70 243
9.4 Average annual growth rate of GDP, GDP per person employed and GDP per capita, 1970–92 244
9.5 Growth rate of total factor productivity in the private sector in 14 OECD countries, 1970–85 245
9.6 Proximate sources of economic growth in the non-government sector, 1950–90 246
9.7 Composition of GDP: Sweden, 1950–90 247
9.8 Macroeconomic outcomes: Sweden, 1940–93 249
9.9 Saving as a percentage of GDP: Sweden, 1950–92 258
9.10 Gross investment as a share of GDP: Sweden, 1950–89 261
9.11 Growth in productivity per hour worked in the competitive and sheltered sectors of the Swedish economy, 1951–90 264
9.12 The public sector share as a percentage of GDP in Sweden and in the OECD, selected dates 269
9.13 Total tax wedge on labour income: Sweden, 1952–92 272
9.14 Share of labour force having completed secondary education, 1987 274
9.15 Share of labour force having completed tertiary education, 1987 274
9.16 Before-tax educational premiums (Mincerian rates of return) in Sweden, 1968–91 275
9.17 Percentage increase in the hourly wage attributable to an additional year of labour market experience: Sweden, 1968–91 276
10.1 Population, gross domestic product, GDP per capita and GDP per hour worked: Netherlands, north-western Europe and the USA, 1913–90 291
10.2 GDP per head of the population and GDP per hour worked: Netherlands, north-western Europe and the USA, 1913–90 292
10.3 Distribution of spendable income in the Netherlands, 1959–90 293
10.4 Sectoral shares of employment in the total economy of the Netherlands, 1909–90 294
10.5 Value added and labour productivity by sector of the economy in the Netherlands, 1950–90 294
10.6 Value added per person employed in agriculture, manufacturing and the rest of the economy, 1950–90 295
10.7 Labour force, employment, hours worked and labour force participation: Netherlands, 1913–90 296
10.8 Average unemployment rates and growth rates of wages in the Netherlands and north-western Europe, 1929–90 297
10.9 Average growth rates of investment and annual compound growth rates of capital stock, capital intensity and the capital–output ratios: Netherlands, 1947–90 298
10.10 Capital intensity and total factor productivity in the Netherlands as a percentage of the average for France/Germany/UK and the United States, 1950–90 299

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

10.11 Decomposition on growth of GDP and the contribution of total factor productivity growth in the Netherlands, 1950–90 300
10.12 Educational distribution of the Dutch labour force, 1960, 1971 and 1987 300
10.13 Labour costs, labour productivity and unit labour costs in manufacturing: Netherlands, 1950–90 313
10.14 Exports and export surplus as a percentage of GDP, export volume and terms of trade in the Netherlands, 1929–90 315
10.15 Government expenditure in the Netherlands as a percentage of net national income, 1955–90 318
10.16 Tax revenues in the Netherlands as a percentage of gross domestic product, 1965–89 320
11.1 Average per-capita product of the world countries in relation to Portuguese per-capita product 332
11.2 Growth accounting for phases: Portugal, 1952–91 333
11.3 Sources of output growth in Portugal, 1959–74 334
11.4 Growth, unemployment and political instability in Portugal, 1946–91 337
11.5 Portuguese external relations, 1948–91 337
11.6 Portuguese exchange rates, 1946–91 337
11.7 Portuguese government debt, 1946–91 338
11.8 Portuguese demand shares, 1952–90 338
11.9 The *Planos de Fomento* 340
11.10 Portuguese exports by sector, 1938–90 348
11.11 Portuguese imports by sector, 1938–90 348
11.12 Portuguese exports by country, 1938–90 349
11.13 Portuguese imports by country, 1938–90 349
11.14 Postwar emigration from Portugal, 1946–91 350
11.15 Portuguese adult illiteracy rate, 1940–91 351
11.16 Rates of return to education and job training in Portugal, 1977 and 1985 351
12.1 Comparative performance of Spain's real GDP per head, 1850–1993 356
12.2 Sources of Spain's economic growth, 1965–90 359
12.3 Relative growth of Spain's real GDP per head, 1950–85 359
12.4 Differential growth of Spain's real GDP per head, 1965–90 360
12.5 GDP and employment composition: Spain, 1929–93 368
13.1 Economic growth in Ireland, the UK and Europe, 1950–88 391
13.2 Maddison and Heston–Summers GDP per capita 399
13.3 Gross investment, 1961–90 405
13.4 Investment by use: Ireland, 1953–90 406
13.5 Returns on investment in transport equipment, selected years 407
13.6 Net migration in Western Europe, 1950–87 409
13.7 A measure of two-way trade, North and South, 1926–91 411
13.8 Calmfors–Driffill indicators of economic performance 416
13.9 Cross-section analysis, 1950–60 418
13.10 Cross-section analysis, 1960–73 418

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

13.11 Cross-section analysis, 1973–88 419
13.12 Cross-section analysis, 1950–88 420
14.1 Levels and growth rates of real per-capita GDP: G7 countries, 1938–89 428
14.2 Main economic indicators: Italy, 1951–90 428
14.3 Value added per labour unit: Italy, 1951–89 429
14.4 Regional value added per labour unit: Italy, 1951–89 430
14.5 The sources of growth: Italy, 1938–90 (revenue side) 433
14.6 The sources of growth: Italy, 1938–90 (cost side) 434
15.1 The proximate causes of growth: Germany, 1870–1989 456
15.2 Convergence of value added per hour in manufacturing and the total economy: Germany, 1950–90 457
15.3 Growth accounting for manufacturing: Germany, France, Italy and UK, 1950–88 457
15.4 The balance between productivity and wages in industry: Germany, 1948–52 464
15.5 Sources of growth of non-agricultural employment: Germany, 1955–73 468
15.6 Educational and vocational qualifications of German and foreign employees, 1984 469
15.7 Apprentices as a share of employment in Germany, 1950–88 475
15.8 Comparative levels of labour productivity per hour, manufacturing: Germany, USA and Japan, 1973–90 476
15.9 German export competitiveness, 1979 and 1990 477
15.10 World market shares of Germany and its competitors, 1980 and 1990 478
15.11 Comparisons of productivity measures in the biscuit industry: quality effects 480
15.12 The transition from school to work: comparison between Germany and the USA 486
16.1 Growth of per-capita output and productivity: East Germany and West Germany, 1950–89 500
16.2 Population and the labour force: East Germany, 1950–89 502
16.3 Human capital investment in East Germany, 1950–89 502
16.4 Estimates of comparative East German levels of productivity 503
16.5 Output of GDR industry as a percentage share of total output of Potsdam Germany, 1944 505
16.6 Capacity losses due to war damage and dismantling: East Germany and West Germany, 1936–50 506
16.7 Population in Potsdam Germany, 1939–50 507
16.8 Capital–labour ratios in German manufacturing, 1950 507
16.9 Output in East German manufacturing, 1945–50 509
16.10 East German manufacturing output per person employed, 1936 and 1950 509
16.11 Company data on East German productivity, 1936–50 510
16.12 East German reparations to the USSR 513
16.13 Per-capita consumption in early postwar Germany 513

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

16.14 Composition of output and investment by major sectors: East Germany, 1936–60 515
16.15 The efficiency of investment: East Germany and West Germany, 1950–60 515
16.16 The efficiency of investment: East Germany, 1960–70 519
16.17 Output of consumer durables by categories: East Germany, 1950–70 520
16.18 Growth in the East German economy, 1970–80 521
16.19 The efficiency of investment: East Germany, 1970–80 522
16.20 East Germany's cumulative trade balance in the 1970s 522
16.21 The efficiency of investment: East Germany, 1980–9 523
16.22 World market and COMECON prices for crude oil, 1972–89 524
16.23 Growth in the East German economy, 1980–9 525
16.24 Valuta mark/mark exchange rate for East German exports, 1970–89 526
16.25 East Germany's trade balance and foreign debt, 1980–9 527
16.26 East German trade with Western countries, 1980–9 528
17.1 Long-run growth performance in international perspective 545
17.2 Annual change in GDP per work-hour in Denmark and average for 16 countries, decades 1870–1989 546
17.3 Average annual rate of growth of real GNP: Denmark, EC4 and other Nordic countries, 1950–92 546
17.4 Annual change in total factor productivity: Denmark, 1966–91 548
17.5 Average change per year in total factor productivity, labour productivity and capital productivity in the private sector, 1966–91 549
17.6 Indicators of sectoral shifts: Denmark, 1945–50 554
17.7 Sectoral GNP growth indicators: Denmark, 1950–89 561

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Cambridge University Press
052149964X - Economic Growth in Europe since 1945
Edited by Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo
Frontmatter
More information

Preface

Our principal aim in organizing this volume has been to present case studies of postwar growth in individual countries written in such a way that the book as a whole gives the reader a genuinely comparative picture. The collection also contains papers on important aspects of the general experience of growth, and an overview chapter which is intended to provide the context into which the country studies fit.

The work which is reported in this book is the outcome of a network which operated during 1992–3 sponsored by the SPES programme of the European Commission, directed by Crafts and Toniolo and administered by CEPR. This organization permitted the establishment of a common format for the country studies and facilitated exchange of ideas and mutual criticism of initial drafts, with the result that the papers are more comparable than would otherwise have been the case.

The reawakening of economists' interest in growth since the mid-1980s has been one of the principal reasons for this project. At the same time, it is now quite a while since the last exercise of a similar kind, the much used and respected collection edited by A. Boltho (*The European Economy: Growth and Crisis*, Oxford University Press, 1982). The authors in this volume are able to revisit the topic of postwar growth armed not only with some new theoretical ideas, but also with the experience of the 1980s on which to draw.

Moreover, on this occasion the analysis has been based not only on applied economics, but also on economic history. Thus, while the book is greatly informed by insights from growth theory, the approach in the country studies emphasizes the presentation of chronological and institutional detail. The case study approach and the adoption of a longer-run perspective than is normal for economists allow insights to be obtained which do not emerge from standard cross-section regressions based on the post-1960 period.

These various themes are developed in the overview chapter by Crafts and Toniolo. This paper focuses particularly on the so-called Golden Age of growth conventionally dated as 1950–73. Two important points which stand out are that the catch-up of leading countries by followers was much stronger in this period than

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Frontmatter
More information

in any other, and that this catch-up was by no means automatic, but was based on particular institutional arrangements and historical circumstances. These are explored at a general level in the contributions by Boltho, Eichengreen and Olson, while Olson's well-known ideas relating to Eurosclerosis are scrutinized for the central case of Germany by Paqué.

Authors of the country studies were asked to consider the role that catch-up and convergence played in each case, and also to examine more generally the determinants of productivity performance and to consider the legacy of the interwar and wartime experience. Clearly, investment in 'broad capital' was expected to be a central concern, but this would be seen in its institutional context, which could be expected to have influenced incentives to invest. The extent of institutional differences across Western European countries is broad enough to make this a potentially rewarding exercise, but the research required to address this issue fully remains a large project for the future.

Each country study contains an overview of performance and a brief chronological account of growth divided into similar subsections. There is also an opportunity to take up interesting aspects of growth specific to individual countries. The set of countries comprises most of Western Europe together with East Germany. East Germany has been included not only because of unification, but also because it allows further insights into what the West got right after World War II.

Members of the network on European growth also devoted a good deal of effort to exploring quantitative aspects of economic growth, with a view to improving understanding of and facilitating access to the key raw materials of a database for studying postwar growth. In addition, the evidence on key topics such as convergence, investment in broad capital and trend growth was evaluated on a cross-sectional basis. This work should be seen as complementary to the present volume, in terms of providing further interpretation of postwar economic history and also factual material for reference, and it is to be published as B. van Ark and N.F.R. Crafts (eds.), *Quantitative Aspects of Postwar European Economic Growth* in 1996.

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Frontmatter
More information

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