

Series 4: Motorways

Map 1: *Length of Motorways, 1925-1940*

The map depicts the beginning of the construction of motorways in Europe during the interwar period (up to 1940), with Italy pioneering as the first country in the construction of motorways (83 km in 1925), and Germany then overtaking Italy after 1935 as a result of its *Reichsautobahn* program during which about 3700 km of motorways were built. The third European country possessing motorways during this period were the Netherlands, where about 100 kilometres had been built by 1940.

Map 2: *Length of Motorways, 1950-1965*

The map shows the situation after the Second World War. Germany, although divided into two countries, still possessed most of the motorways in Europe, even if the two German states are looked upon separately. By 1965, West Germany had about 3400 km, East Germany nearly 1400 km in operation, with the East German portion totally derived from the Nazi period, though. Italy started impressive spurt in motorway building, adding some 1200 km to its network after 1960 for a total of some 1700 km. In the rest of Europe, motorway construction was starting in almost every corner of the continent, if at a modest tempo initially. In the United Kingdom 600 kilometres were accessible by 1965, in France about 650. Only in the eastern part of Europe and in Turkey motorway construction had not yet started at all.

Map 3: *Length of Motorways, 1970-1985*

The map shows a geographically uneven spread of motorways in Europe built during the 1970s and early 1980s. There is a clear dominance of Western Europe (West Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Great Britain) and Southern Europe (Italy and a bit later Spain), while the eastern parts of Europe and Scandinavia are still lagging behind. Looking at the countries individually, the diagrams show the great gains made in construction in some countries during the period, particularly in Italy, France, Great Britain, and West Germany. These four countries comprised slightly more than 60 percent of the total European network in 1985 (23.100 of 37.500 km). Moreover, some of the smaller territorial countries like Belgium and the Netherlands had built national networks of remarkable length (1500 km and 2000 km, respectively), and had thus achieved a high level of infrastructural density. Lastly, the division of Europe as a result of the “Cold War” seems mirrored by an almost total absence of motorways in the east bloc-countries, with the sole exception of East Germany (1850 km) and Yugoslavia (720 km).

Map 4: *Length of Motorways, 1990-2000*

This map looks at the 1990s. A striking feature displayed in the diagrams is the spurt in motorway construction in France (6800 to 11.500 km), Spain (2400 to 9050 km). Portugal (300 to 1500 km), and Turkey (280 to 750 km), while in formerly leading ‘building countries’ (Germany, Great Britain) stagnation at high level prevails. Moreover, the map illustrates that motorways are still a predominantly western and southern European feature compared to the

eastern part of the continent, where construction of national motorway networks has only just begun in some of the newly formed countries. The surprising decline in the number of kilometres shown for motorways in Italy in 2000 can be explained by a change in definition of *Autostrada* between 1995 and 2000. In northern Europe modest gains have been made, particularly in Sweden (940 to 1500 km).