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## The State of UK Academic Economics (according to citations)

Recently, much concern has been expressed regarding the position of UK economists in the international setting. A study by Reiner Eichenberger and Bruno S Frey<sup>1</sup> based on a comprehensive set of citations for the period 1993-1996 shows that UK economists clearly dominate academic economics in Europe. They are ranked first with respect to 'eminent' economists according to the absolute number of citations as well as citations per capita of the population. They also dominate the list of the most frequently quoted European economists. According to these measurements, UK economists are much more successful than their counterparts in France, Germany, Italy or any other European nation for that matter. This is their brief report of that study.

FOLLOWING Mark Blaug's *Who's Who in Economics* (with Sturges 1983, 1986, 1999) an 'eminent economist' is defined as one of the most frequently cited scholars, according to the Social Sciences Citation Index. We have extended Blaug's data base considerably and used a cut-off point of more than 100 citations over the period 1993-96, yielding a set of 160 eminent economists active in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

The ranking of the ten European nations with the largest absolute number of eminent economists (the percentages indicate the share in the total number of the 160 eminent economists) is as follows:

|     |                              |    |     |
|-----|------------------------------|----|-----|
| 1.  | United Kingdom               | 91 | 57% |
| 2.  | France                       | 13 | 8%  |
| 3.  | Belgium                      | 10 | 6%  |
| 4.  | Germany                      | 9  | 6%  |
| 5.  | Italy                        | 8  | 5%  |
| 6.  | Switzerland                  | 7  | 4%  |
| 7.  | Netherlands                  | 6  | 4%  |
| 8.  | Sweden                       | 5  | 3%  |
| 9.  | Spain                        | 3  | 2%  |
| 10. | Norway                       | 2  | 1%  |
|     | All other European countries | 6  | 4%  |

Almost 60 percent of all eminent European economists are located in the United Kingdom. No other European country has a share of more than 10 per cent.

It might be asked whether the predominance of the UK is just the result of its large population, particularly compared to nations such as Belgium (10 million inhabitants), Sweden (9 million) and Switzerland (7 million). The next table, which divides the number of eminent economists by the population size (in millions), demonstrates that this is not the case. The United Kingdom still ranks first - by a considerable margin. It represents a special case even among the large European countries, with a population of about 60 million and above: France and Italy drop back to ranks 9 and 10, and Germany does not even make the list.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the small countries, especially Belgium, Switzerland and Sweden, do relatively well.

|     |                |      |
|-----|----------------|------|
| 1.  | United Kingdom | 1.55 |
| 2.  | Belgium        | 0.99 |
| 3.  | Switzerland    | 0.99 |
| 4.  | Sweden         | 0.57 |
| 5.  | Norway         | 0.46 |
| 6.  | Netherlands    | 0.39 |
| 7.  | Denmark        | 0.38 |
| 8.  | Ireland        | 0.28 |
| 9.  | France         | 0.22 |
| 10. | Italy          | 0.14 |

Academic economists of the United Kingdom also dominate the list of Europe's most often cited persons. Among the top twenty, no fewer than eleven work in the UK. Two are in France, and one each in Denmark, Hungary, Austria, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The share of UK academics is thus almost the same as among the eminent economists.

We do not doubt that UK academic economists have gone through a very difficult and unfortunate period. It is therefore all the more remarkable how successful they have been with respect to their scholarly output.

### Notes:

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2. For more details see the Eichenberger and Frey (2000).

3. See Ray Rees 'Letter from Germany', *Newsletter* no. 110, July 2000).

### References:

Eichenberger R and B S Frey (2000), *Europe's Eminent Economists: A Quantitative Analysis*, Working Paper Series of the Institute for Empirical Research in Economics, University of Zurich. <http://www.iew.unizh.ch/wp/index.html>

Blaug M, with P Sturges (3e, 1999) *Who's Who in Economics?* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.