

**The impact of regional development policies on ICT and biotech firm creation:
a comparative analysis of France, Germany and the UK**

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The biotech sector is considered by many governments as a strategic area of development, capable to provide high value outputs and high levels of employment. On the other hand, the situation of the biotech start-ups is usually very risky and unstable. Most of these firms do not have any sales in the first 5 to 10 years of their activity, because the development of a final product requires a long period of time and huge investments of human knowledge and financial resources. Additionally, the business environment of the biotech sector is extremely dynamic and competitive, raising important challenges for the survival and development of the biotech start-ups.

On the other hand, the development of a biotech start-up is conditioned by the existence and availability of a series of strategic resources such as knowledge, investment funds and governmental subsidies, a critical mass of research activities and innovative discoveries, human expertise, geographical proximity between top universities and research institutes and biotech firms, and the existence of geographical clusters or networks of biotech and pharmaceutical companies. The implementation of specific regional development policies by governments can help the creation of biotech entrepreneurial clusters, or the further development of the existing ones, which, at their turn, can contribute to the economic and social progress of a region.

The general principle of sustained regional development through high-tech activities is applied in many different European countries. However, the specific conditions of various countries determine a particular pattern of regional policies and geographical development. Although

the development of regional biotech clusters was already investigated by previous studies, there is comparatively very scarce comparative research concerning the national specificity of this phenomenon in various countries.

This paper attempts to identify the regional policies applied in France, Germany and the UK concerning the development of entrepreneurial biotech clusters, and to compare the situation of these three countries in terms of initial conditions, development patterns, strategic elements and final results. This analysis tries also to identify any common or transferable models, as well as the elements that define a national and/or regional specificity. The conclusions of this study are specifically useful for policy makers, offering them valuable insights into the mechanism of regional development through the creation of high-tech organisations.

The analysis is based exclusively on secondary data, which comprises both industry-specific reports and statistics and official documents describing the plans and the actions concerning the national or regional policy for developing an innovative biotech sector. After a presentation of the specific conditions of the biotech industry in the three analysed countries, the paper discusses and analyses the most relevant government policies implemented in the last 10 years, as well as their partial results. The comparison between these national environment and governmental initiatives indicates the existence of specific national models that are shaped by the specific entrepreneurial conditions and political ideologies from each country.

The results of this study cannot be objectively generalised, however, analysing the interaction between specific governmental policies and the development of biotech entrepreneurial activities can provide useful lessons for other countries that attempt to pursue a similar strategy. Despite the specificity of every country, the fundamental traits of entrepreneurial activities and of the biotech sector determine the existence of common elements that should be taken into account for any regional policy application, regardless to the general national characteristics.