



What Makes a Region Competitive? Soft and Hard Factors of Innovation

Paul Atkinson

Visiting Fellow

Groupe d'Economie Mondiale

GEM de Sciences Po

197, boulevard Saint-Germain – 75007 PARIS

paul.atkinson@sciences-po.org

Strasbourg, 24 November 200



A competitive region: an attractive place to do business, able to generate jobs and support high living standards.

Two issues:

- How to strengthen innovation and competitiveness?
- How can regional governments contribute?



Framework conditions that create the overall business environment.

Regions can:

- Minimize red tape, keep paperwork easy;
- Facilitate new activity with land use and building permit policies;
- Assure or help facilitate provision of key infrastructure.



Regions can provide active support with policies and programmes:

- Favor enterprise creation and development;
- Take advantage of science and technology;
- Develop, attract and retain qualified human resources.



But evaluate support policies and programmes:

- Especially where significant amounts of public money are spent;
- Not politically exciting but essential for sound public policy;
- Build review and evaluation into programmes at the design stage.



Can we prioritize?

A recent study cited:

- Education;
- Quality of life;
- Inward migration, especially of entrepreneurial talent;
- Infrastructure, especially transport and telecommunications.