

Regional Effectiveness of Rural Research Sites

Research question:

How do rural research sites contribute to regional development –
and how can their regional effectiveness be measured?

Why is this relevant for the Pilot?

- The core objective of the Czech-Bavarian Pilot is to establish a Czech-Bavarian Innovation Hub to foster regional economic development, attracting and retaining skilled labour, cooperating with regional industry and increase regional attractiveness
- Rural research sites are intended to generate regional benefits – but conventional performance indicators do not necessarily capture these effects

→ this makes the study directly relevant to WP7's focus on monitoring and assessing regional impact

Study Setting

- The analysis deliberately focuses on the geographical/regional role of research site
- Peripheral rural region of Eastern Bavaria, close to the Czech-Bavarian border
- Satellite research sites affiliated with a university of applied sciences



Research design

Four complementary analytical components:

- Pre-opening newspaper analysis
 - What regional actors expected from the research sites
- Analysis of official evaluation documents
 - What the institutions currently measure
- Employee survey
 - Employees' residence, commuting, spending and perceptions
- Semi-structured interviews
 - Employees' and management's understanding of regional effectiveness

Findings – Definition of Region

- Key message: The "region" is a functional rather than purely administrative space
- Regional impact does not necessarily follow administrative boundaries
- This is particularly relevant for rural areas where labour markets and everyday mobility extend across administrative borders

Findings – Human Capital Retention

- Key message: Employment continuity is a critical factor, it leads to regional embeddedness and long-term regional effects
- The strongest regional effect is human-capital retention and skilled employment opportunities in rural areas
- Enable research-oriented careers without requiring relocation to larger cities

This suggests that employment stability and retention should be considered as an impact dimension, not merely staff numbers

Findings – Regional Cooperation

- Key message: Regional cooperation is important, but difficult
- There is a tension between regional needs and external funding priorities
- This leads to a potential mismatch between regional expectations and research funding structures
- Companies and research organisations operate with different time horizons

Findings – Communication and networks

- Key message: Communication is not simply an additional activity, it is part of the mechanism through which regional impact is generated
- Communication, networking and long-term partnerships are mechanisms through which research become regionally visible and useful
- Regional effectiveness therefore depends not only on what research is produced, but also on:
 - whether regional actors know about it
 - whether research sites participate in regional networks
 - whether partnerships continue over time
 - whether research results reach society and businesses

Findings – How to measure regional effectiveness

- Key message: Quantitative indicators such as number of projects, publications, industry cooperation and employees are useful, but must be complemented
- Additional indicators are required for
 - Human Capital: employee retention, permanent vs fixed-term contracts
 - Territorial Embeddedness: regional networks, residence, commuting
 - Knowledge Transfer: long-term partnerships, knowledge transfer activities
 - Regional Impact: regional visibility, alignment with regional needs

Key message for PoliRuralPlus

- Regional effectiveness is not only about what a rural research site produces – but about the relationships it builds and sustains in the region.
- The study suggests that rural research sites can contribute to regional development through:
 - human-capital retention
 - regional embeddedness
 - knowledge and industry networks
 - longer-term regional effects

From measuring research outputs to measuring regional embeddedness

- Go beyond output indicators
- Measure retention, not only attraction
- Include employment continuity
- Use functional regional geographies
- Combine quantitative and qualitative evidence

Regional effectiveness should be understood as a long-term process of human-capital retention and territorial embeddedness, rather than as a simple sum of research outputs

What this means for Regional Action Plans

The findings support RAP measures that strengthen:

- stable and attractive employment opportunities
- Research-industry cooperation
- regional knowledge networks
- communication of research activities
- links between research institutions and regional actors
- retention of young and highly skilled people
- functional rural-urban and cross-boundary linkages
- long-term monitoring of regional embeddedness