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Improving e-economy by regional governments

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to analyse and assess a government support programme for business innovation in a very peripheral European region: the Spanish region of Andalucía.

Design/methodology/approach

Endogenous development approach is used to categorize the main public and private actions included in the government ICT support programme. Cross-time analysis has been carried out by using three territorial indicators of diffusion and effective use of ICT: the physical aspect, referred to the infrastructures used as a base for the information society development (infrastructures, technology and equipment); the actors and their degree of organization (firms present on the internet and support organizations and institutions); and knowledge, referred to the technological sprawl and the entrepreneurship capacity (fostering innovation and training among the general population and businesses).

Findings

The study confirms that the public policies implemented are coherent with the endogenous development approach, where investment in physical and human capital have been accompanied by enabling measures of interaction between firms and other economical agents (universities, business associations, business centres and technology institutes, etc.), with a view to favouring the dissemination of innovations and knowledge among firms. Secondly, the research assess the impact of this ICT programme, both in terms of economic growth and per capita income, as well as on the main variables that reflect the degree of business participation in the Information Society. Results show that, during the period 1996-2010, this region has made important progress in terms of convergence with more advanced European regions.

Research limitations/implications

The study has methodological implications in terms of designs of further ICT programmes in less developed European regions to broke the digital divide.

Practical implications

Recent outlooks of the OECD call for more assessment research on ICT national and regional policies around the world, especially those that prove that it is possible to broke the international digital divide. The present study suggests that public policies following the directives laid down by the endogenous development approach can reach this economic and social target. The Andalucía Information Society Programme constitutes a real commitment and private-public partnership towards a structural change in the technological culture amongst businesses. Investment in physical capital and human capital has been accompanied by measures that enable the interaction of firms with other economic agents (university, business associations, technology centres, etc.), with a view to favouring the dissemination of innovation and knowledge among firms.

Originality/value

The study uses for the first time the endogenous development approach applied to a less advanced region for evaluation of ICT policy and it improves a methodology based on this approach to assess its effectiveness.

Keywords

Economic development

Innovation

Policy

Information society

Business support services

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