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**Benefits and costs of transnational collaborative
partnerships in higher education**

Executive Summary

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Daniela Craciun and Kata Orosz
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Benefits and costs of transnational collaborative partnerships in higher education

Daniela Craciun and Kata Orosz

Executive summary (English)

Governments have been looking for ways to reduce the costs and maximise the benefits of higher education. Fostering cooperation between higher education institutions is one of the strategic options chosen by European countries in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their higher education systems.

This report draws on a systematic review of empirical evidence to summarise what is known and what is not known about the economic and non-economic benefits and costs associated with transnational cooperation in higher education. The analytical framework used to review empirical evidence on the benefits and costs of transnational collaborative partnerships reflects the understanding that: 1) benefits and costs occur at different levels: macro (regional/national), meso (institutional) and micro (individual); and 2) benefits and costs can be: economic or non-economic (academic, socio-cultural and political).

The report finds that while there is a plethora of anecdotal evidence about the benefits and costs of transnational collaborative partnerships, there are relatively few empirical studies testing these causal claims. The table below summarises the findings from these studies.

		LEVEL OF ANALYSIS		
		MACRO (regional/national)	MESO (institutional)	MICRO (individual)
TYPES OF BENEFITS AND COSTS	ECONOMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>More and better patents</i> - <i>Economies of scale</i> 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Higher likelihood of employment at home and abroad</i>
	NON-ECONOMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Positive attitudes towards open borders and democracy</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Strengthened research and teaching capacity</i> - <i>More and better scientific output</i> - <i>Attractiveness to foreign academics</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Better foreign language proficiency</i> - <i>Increased mobility</i> - <i>More and better publications</i>

Looking at the findings summarised in the table above, a couple of issues become immediately apparent. On the one hand, there are empirical studies clearly showing that transnational cooperation leads to both economic and non-economic benefits. On the other hand, studies that empirically investigate the costs of transnational collaborative partnerships do so in an exploratory manner only, without quantifying said costs or attempting to test causal links between collaboration and costs. This represents a significant weakness of the state of the art. To compensate for this weakness, the report discusses cross-cutting challenges identified in qualitative studies on transnational collaborative partnership.

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