

The Erasmus+ Programme as a Framework for the Training of Trainers in Higher Education: The Case of Good Practices in Germany and Spain

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ABSTRACT

University teaching staff face growing pressure to update their pedagogical, digital and social inclusion competences in response to rapid technological and societal change. While the Erasmus+ Programme is one of the EU's main instruments for supporting this training of trainers in higher education, little is known about how it has been used for this purpose in practice. This study addresses this gap by exploring Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of Higher Education (within the Erasmus+ Programme) led by German and Spanish universities that have been identified as examples of good practice. The results show that both countries focus on Educational and Digital Competences. Furthermore, Germany places greater emphasis on Administrative Competences for the modernisation of its institutions, whilst Spain focuses on Social Inclusion Competences to respond to the needs of its increasingly diverse student population. These findings provide an evidence-based map of how Erasmus+ funding is being directed towards teacher training priorities in both countries, highlighting both EU-wide convergence and country-specific institutional agendas.

Keywords: Erasmus+, Germany, higher education, Spain, teacher training, training of trainers

INTRODUCTION

Historically, it used to take several decades for established and traditional practices to change. However, the first 25 years of the 21st century have shown that the vast majority of technologies, approaches, methods, inventions and ideas become obsolete at an alarming rate. Education is no exception to these processes of rapid obsolescence. Traditional top-down approaches no longer work (Honkimäki et al., 2022). Students are no longer the objects of teaching but have become the subjects of learning (Charokar & Dulloo, 2022). Teachers must rethink educational processes to transform teaching practices (Maharjan et al., 2024). Educational institutions must adapt to teaching in an increasingly digital (Barr & Luo, 2026) and interconnected world (Adeshina, 2024).

Against this backdrop, universities play a key role in responding to the challenges posed by today's knowledge society, globalisation and digitalisation (Ul Hassan et al., 2025). In particular, because they are one of the institutions responsible for training qualified individuals, conducting research into present and future challenges, and putting the knowledge generated into practice so that it has a positive impact on society (Rodelas, 2026). In other words, higher education institutions make a significant contribution to the generation of knowledge, the creation of spaces for innovation and the attraction of talent, enabling us to respond to the challenges of the 21st century.

To achieve this, one of the cornerstones of higher education institutions is having a teaching staff that genuinely supports student learning. For whilst the need to prepare students for their professional future remains the main objective of the education system, the demands arising from changes in the labour market and the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) into the workplace mean that teaching staff must also be prepared for these new realities and update their interpersonal, didactic and research competences (Asagar, 2026; Chadha, 2024; Parker, 2026).

This is precisely what motivates the present study's focus on the training of trainers in higher education. This process encompasses the actions undertaken to expand, develop and update skills that enable adaptation to day-to-day needs (Zeichner 2016), to engage in continuous learning (Korthagen, 2017), to strengthen the development of teaching practice (Marcelo & Vaillant, 2018), and protect themselves against burnout (Chahar Mahali et al., 2026). In other words, it is not

possible for teaching staff to practise their profession competently on the basis of initial training alone; rather, ongoing professional development is also necessary throughout their entire professional career (Özer et al., 2020).

Traditionally, the most common activities in training of trainers have been the development of structured courses, job shadowing at other educational institutions, or attending seminars (European Commission, 2023). In recent years, these activities have expanded to include service-learning or project-based learning (Tijmsa et al., 2020). These latter approaches have gained ground because they adhere more closely to a constructivist approach or a holistic perspective on knowledge construction, where the trainee takes an active and leading role in their own learning (Agama-Sarabia & Crespo-Knopfler, 2016).

As discussed earlier, societies are currently facing drastic technological, political, social, economic and educational changes. This means that society increasingly expects teachers to be not only knowledge transmitters, but also reflective, creative and innovative practitioners (Kutsak, 2023). It is therefore essential that university teaching staff update their knowledge and teaching methods, as well as acquire new competences that enable them to meet educational and institutional demands.

In light of these challenges, the European Union (EU) has launched, amongst other initiatives, the Erasmus+ Programme to promote quality, innovation and internationalisation in education, as well as to address the various challenges and realities that universities and their teaching staff are currently facing and will have to face in the coming years (Nogueiro et al., 2024). There is a growing need to design teacher training programmes within the university sector, with the aim of updating the knowledge and skills required not only for teaching, but also to address the various situations that may arise in a university classroom, in relation to academic responsibilities, depending on the technological resources available or their impact on students.

Therefore, this study aims to explore Strategic Partnerships and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of Higher Education (within the Erasmus+ Programme) led by German and Spanish institutions that have been considered examples of good practice in training of trainers. By articulating a coherent, evidence-based approach to identifying which teaching competences have been developed in these projects, this study contributes both to theoretical understanding and to practical strategies for improving teacher training in the field of higher education at European level.

THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME AS A FRAMEWORK FOR THE TRAINING OF TRAINERS

The European Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, commonly referred to as Erasmus+, is one of the EU's most significant public policies. This programme is underpinned by the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Strategic Framework for Education and Training, and Article 2 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. During its first phase, from 2014 to 2020, it had a budget of €14.774 billion (European Commission, 2014). For its second phase, from 2021 to 2027, funding is expected to almost double to over €26 billion (European Commission, 2025).

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Erasmus+ Programme focuses on the following four areas: Education, Training, Youth and Sport. Education and Training receive the largest share of funding across the 27 Member States. These, in turn, cover all stages of education: School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education and, the focus of this research, Higher Education (Kennedy, 2016). According to various studies (Araújo & Palmeirão, 2023; Hossain, 2025; Salcedo-López & Cuevas-López, 2021), it is worth noting that the introduction of the Erasmus+ Programme has enabled higher education institutions in Germany and Spain to rethink their pedagogical practices, teaching methods, academic organisation and university governance.

Furthermore, the Erasmus+ Programme is divided into three Key Actions: (1) Mobility of individuals; (2) Cooperation between organisations and institutions; and (3) Support for policy development and cooperation. Within this Key Action 2, there is also the sub-action Strategic Partnerships (from 2014 to 2020) or Cooperation Partnerships (from 2021 to 2027) in Higher Education. These sub-actions aim to “support the higher education sector in becoming even more inter-connected, innovative, inclusive and digital” (European Commission, 2025).

According to various studies, the Erasmus+ Programme enables the exploration of topics as diverse as entrepreneurship (Andreou et al., 2023), civic education (Escamilla, 2020), new technologies (Poszytek et al., 2021), gender equality (de Castro & García-Peñalvo, 2022), intercultural communication (Emecen & Sariçoban, 2024) and cultural heritage (Escamilla & Gonzalo, 2024). This means that the Erasmus+ Programme also enables teacher training courses to provide university lecturers with a wide range of activities to acquire, update and refresh their skills across numerous subject areas (Blanco-Reyes et al., 2017). In particular, because Erasmus+ projects enable the analysis of European educational policies and their comparison with national ones (Kennedy, 2014), the tackling of pedagogical challenges (across various subjects) in intercultural contexts (Dolce et al., 2023), the development of innovative curricula or tools for classroom teaching

(Fumasoli & Rossi, 2021) and to become aware of their European identity (Fernández-Agüero & Garrote, 2019).

Moreover, the Erasmus+ Programme provides a framework that brings together formal education, non-formal education and lifelong learning. This combination of approaches is key to training of trainers initiatives, because it enables not only the acquisition, updating and refreshing of skills for teaching (Fumasoli & Rossi, 2021), but also the exchange of good practices between institutions, teachers and students (Nogueiro et al., 2022). Thus, developing a train-the-trainer project within this European programme requires teachers to undertake two processes. First, to examine their individual position as a teacher in terms of their competences, tools and teaching methods (which they possess, which they need to update and which they need to acquire). Second, to explore their position as part of a collective, an institution, a country and a continent, in order to propose changes and improvements that have a positive impact on the education system as a whole (Blanco-Reyes et al., 2022).

Furthermore, each EU country has one or more National Agencies responsible for coordinating the Erasmus+ Programme within their respective territories. In Germany, the former Strategic Partnerships and the current Cooperation Partnerships in the field of Higher Education are managed by the National Agency for Erasmus+ Higher Education Cooperation within the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD according to its German acronym). In the case of Spain, these same sub-actions are managed by the Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education (SEPIE according to its Spanish acronym) of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. This is relevant because both public institutions are responsible for selecting which projects are funded and, once their implementation is complete, deciding which ones are worthy of being classified as good practices.

Overall, the National Agencies of the Erasmus+ Programme use the following criteria to determine whether a project can be considered a good practice:

1. The relevance of the project's outcomes to its objectives;
2. The overall quality of the project's management and implementation;
3. The development of efficient practices, techniques, methods, processes or technologies; and
4. The project's impact and the dissemination of its results.

Identifying good practices is important for understanding and gaining deeper insight into how an activity is carried out, for comparing working methods, and for keeping up to date with successful ways of operating (Kilag et al., 2023). In this regard, the National Agencies aim for these success stories, first and foremost, to serve as a source of inspiration for other higher education institutions

when designing their own initiatives. Secondly, they also aim to identify projects that are sustainable over time and can remain active once Erasmus+ funding has ended.

Despite what has been described in the preceding paragraphs, research on the Erasmus+ Programme remains limited, and even more so when it comes to the training of trainers within higher education institutions. This is one of the reasons why it was decided to undertake this study, in particular to explore the following questions:

1. How do the Erasmus+ Programme's Strategic Partnerships and Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education approach the training of trainers in Germany and Spain?
2. What are the main topics addressed in the training of trainers within the Erasmus+ Programme's Strategic Partnerships and Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education led by German and Spanish institutions?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Objectives

As discussed in the final section of the previous chapter, this study has two objectives. Firstly, to provide an overview of the distribution of Erasmus+ Higher Education Strategic Partnerships and Cooperation Partnerships that are considered good practice in Germany and Spain. Secondly, to identify the main themes addressed in these good practices, in order to determine which area is most closely linked to the training of trainers in the field of higher education under the Erasmus+ Programme, led by German and Spanish organisations.

Data Collection and Processing

Data collection was carried out in several sequential stages. First, the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform was used to filter projects by call year (2014–2025), type of sub-action (Strategic Partnerships and Cooperation Partnerships), and country of the coordinating organisation (Germany and Spain). This search returned 279 projects for Germany and 217 for Spain. Then, the 'good practices' filter was selected on the same platform, reducing the final sample size to 72 projects for Germany and 73 for Spain.

Once the sample had been established, the complete dataset was exported from the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform in .xlsx format. Each project is required to select the three main themes it addresses in accordance with the standardised taxonomy of the Erasmus+ Programme, which comprises 38 options. Given that this taxonomy is too broad, the standardised categories were

systematically grouped into the following seven themes: Educational Competences, Social Inclusion Competences, Digital Competences or Scenarios, Work-related Competences, Environmental Competences, Administrative Competences and Citizenship Competences (see Table 1).

Table 1: *Grouping of thematic categories within the Erasmus+ Programme Results Platform*

Categorisation for this Research	Erasmus+ Programme Thematic Categories
Educational Competences	New innovative curricula/educational methods/development of training courses Research and innovation Teaching and learning of foreign languages Pedagogy and didactics Creating new, innovative or joint curricula or courses New learning and teaching methods and approaches
Social Inclusion Competences	Inclusion - equity Disabilities - special needs Access for disadvantaged Gender equality / equal opportunities Early School Leaving / Combating failure in education / Early childhood education Integration refugees / Migrants issues
Digital Competences	Open and distance learning ICT - new technologies - digital competences Digital content, technologies and practices
Labour Competences	Labour market issues and cooperation between educational institutions and business Enterprise, industry, SMEs and entrepreneurship
Environmental Competences	Environment, climate change, energy and resources Agriculture, forestry and fisheries Health and well-being
Administrative Competences	Recognition, transparency, certification Quality assurance and improvement of institutions
Citizenship Competences	Civic engagement / responsible citizenship Social dialogue / Creativity and culture

Note. Own elaboration.

Building on this, a documentary analysis of the dataset with the 145 projects was carried out using the following information: title, abstract, thematic priority, institutional profile and budget. This type of analysis was chosen because it allows the data collected to be coded, identified, interpreted and given meaning

(Morgan, 2022). To carry out this analysis, natural language processing (NLP) techniques were used in Python 3.11, which enabled the information relating to the three research objectives to be systematically classified, the standardised taxonomy to be grouped into the seven thematic categories, and the characteristics of the Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships designated by the DAAD and SEPIE as examples of good practice to be identified.

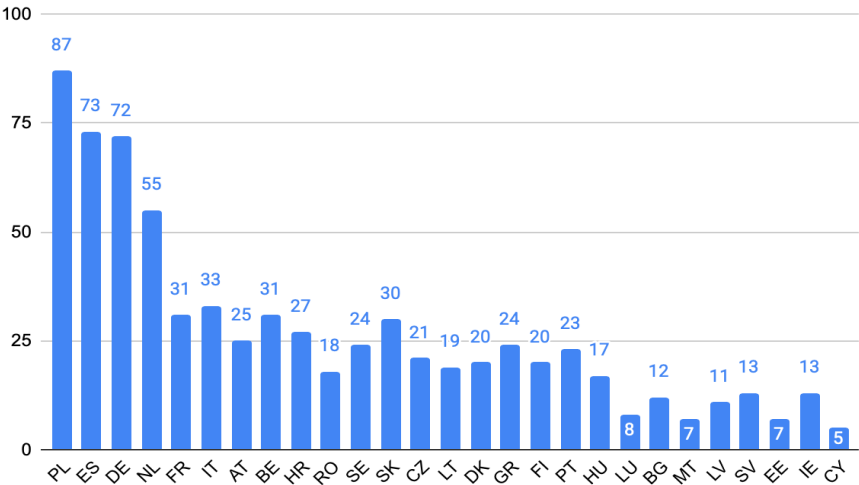
The entire coding and classification process was carried out by a single researcher. In the case of the thematic categories, the frequency with which each of the standardised taxonomies appeared in the dataset was calculated, and these were aggregated into the seven competence categories. It should be noted that a small number of projects selected priority themes that corresponded to more than one of the seven competence categories proposed in this study. Although this was not the predominant pattern in the dataset, from a methodological point of view it was possible for a single project to be counted simultaneously in two different competence categories. In view of this situation, the decision was taken to record the project under all the competences it addressed, rather than applying an arbitrary selection criterion that would have resulted in the loss of thematically relevant information. This decision was made in a deliberate and consistent manner across the entire dataset, ensuring that the frequency counts associated with each competition category accurately reflected the full thematic scope of the projects analysed.

RESULTS

Across the 27 EU Member States, there are a total of 857 Strategic Partnerships and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of higher education that have been identified as examples of good practice (see Figure 1). The top three are Poland (with 87), Spain (with 73) and Germany (with 72). At the other end of the scale, the countries with the fewest examples of good practice in this sub-action of the Erasmus+ Programme are Estonia (with 7), Malta (with 7) and Cyprus (with 5).

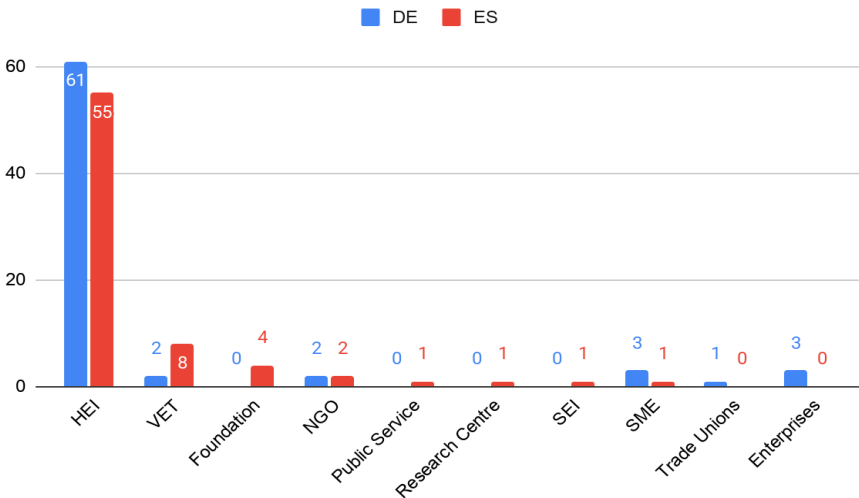
When examining the type of organisation behind these good practices, it can be seen that in both countries higher education institutions lead the way in the Erasmus+ Programme's Strategic Partnerships and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of higher education (see Figure 2). Of the 72 projects in Germany, 61 have been coordinated by universities, whilst in Spain the figure stands at 55. Moreover, in Germany, the second most common type of organisation is private for-profit companies, with 6 projects (including a mix of small, medium and large enterprises). In Spain, the second most common types of organisation in terms of the number of projects are vocational training centres (with 8) and foundations (with 4).

Figure 1: *Number of good practices per EU country*



Note. Own elaboration.

Figure 2: *Type of organisation coordinating good practices in Germany and Spain*

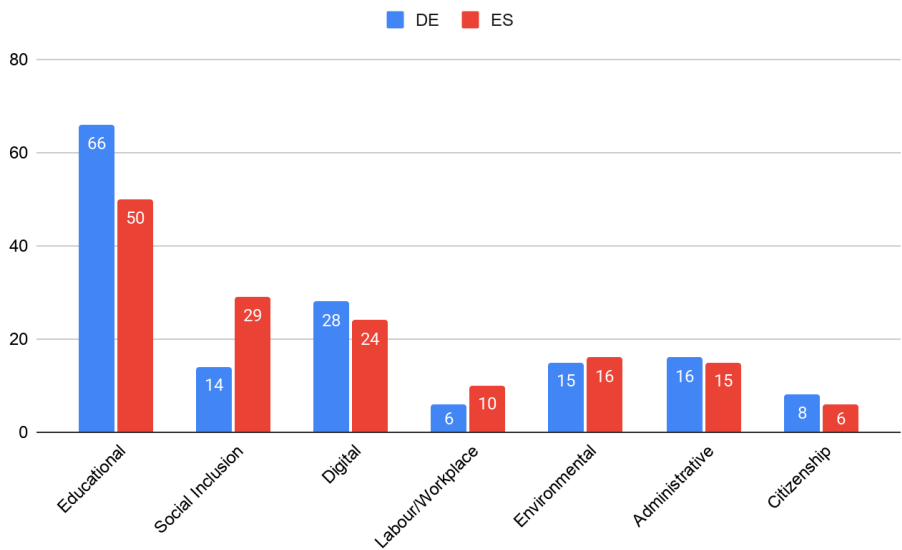


Note. Own elaboration.

As shown in Figure 3, the three themes that feature most prominently in Germany's good practices are: Educational Competences (66), Digital Competences (28) and Administrative Competences (16). Conversely, the themes least prevalent in Germany are: Social Inclusion Competences (14), Citizenship

Competences (8) and Labour Competences (6). In the case of Spain, the three most prevalent themes are: Educational Competences (50), Social Inclusion Competences (29) and Digital Competences (24). As for those least present in Spain, they are: Administrative Competences (15), Labour Competences (10) and Citizenship Competences (6).

Figure 3: *Competences addressed in good practices in Germany and Spain*

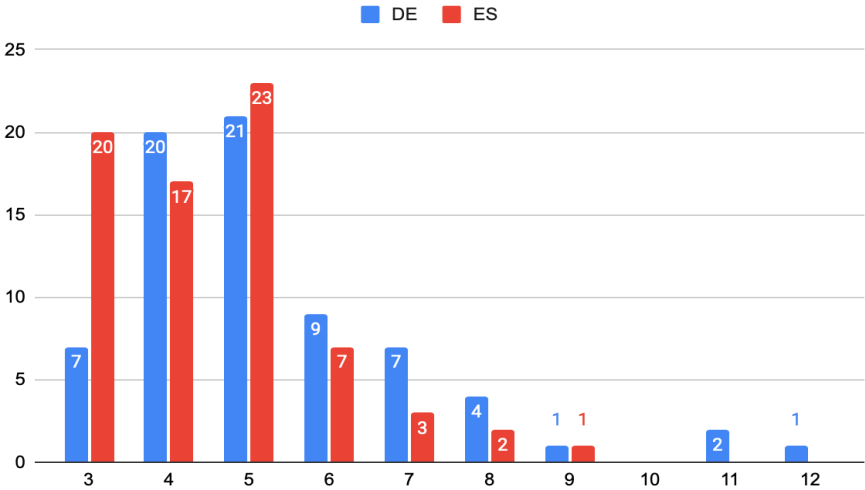


Note. Own elaboration.

Furthermore, as can be seen in Figure 4, projects in Germany are predominantly carried out by consortia involving between four and five countries. In the case of Spain, this range expands slightly to projects involving between three and five countries. Furthermore, although to a much lesser extent, German organisations appear to be more willing than their Spanish counterparts to undertake projects involving a larger number of countries.

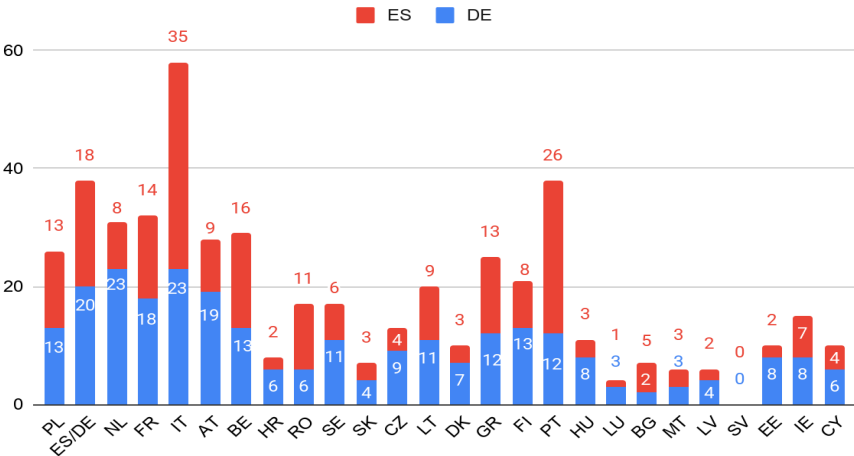
Along similar lines, Figure 5 shows which countries have contributed most to Germany’s good practices: the Netherlands (23), Italy (23) and Spain (20). Conversely, the countries that have participated least with Germany in these initiatives are: Luxembourg (3), Malta (3), Bulgaria (2) and Slovenia (0). In the case of Spain, it can be seen that the countries that have collaborated most in its good practices are: Italy (35), Portugal (26) and Germany (18). The countries that have participated least with Spanish organisations are: Croatia (2), Latvia (2), Estonia (2), Luxembourg (1) and Slovenia (0).

Figure 4: *Number of countries participating in good practices in Germany and Spain*



Note. Own elaboration.

Figure 5: *Countries participating in the good practices of Germany and Spain*

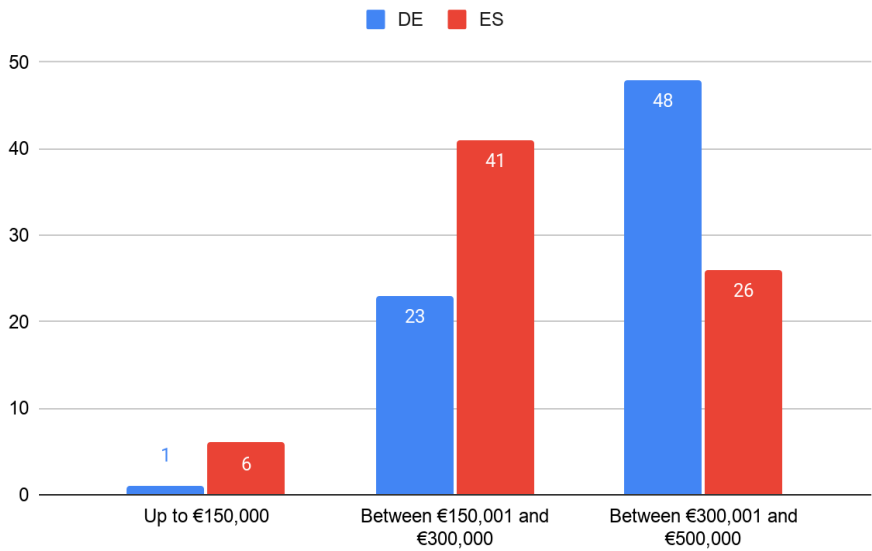


Note. Own elaboration.

A further distinguishing feature of these good practices is the scale of financial resources involved. In this regard, German organisations predominantly opted for projects with a budget of between €300,001 and €500,000. In contrast, Spanish organisations mainly chose initiatives with a budget of between €150,001 and €300,000 (see Figure 6). It was also noted that of the 72 projects considered

good practices in Germany, 65 produced results or intellectual outputs. In Spain, meanwhile, of the 73 good practices, 72 produced results or intellectual outputs.

Figure 6: *Budget range for good practices in Germany and Spain*



Note. Own elaboration.

DISCUSSION

Higher education systems in EU countries have undergone significant changes in recent years, including financial adjustments, changes in governance, stricter evaluation mechanisms, curriculum reforms and technological advances (Khahro & Javed 2022). Despite this, Germany and Spain have consolidated their position at European level as two of the countries with the highest quality in the university sector, particularly because they have succeeded in boosting academic research and international visibility (Artés et al., 2017; Fischer & Kampkötter, 2017). This is evidenced by the fact that, after Poland, Spain and Germany rank among the Member States with the most examples of good practice in Strategic Partnerships and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of Higher Education across the EU.

However, these results must also be considered in the context of another factor. Germany and Spain are among the EU countries that receive the most funding under the Erasmus+ Programme. This means that the DAAD and SEPIE have the financial capacity to approve a greater number of projects and, consequently, have a wider range from which to select good practices within their Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of Higher Education. This also

explains why countries such as Estonia, Malta or Cyprus have a limited number of good practices within the Erasmus+ Programme.

In addition to having a similar number of good practices, Germany and Spain also share the theme that has been most extensively developed within Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships: Educational Competences. Most projects in both countries have sought not only to update their teaching staff on pedagogical methodologies, but also on how to develop new ways of engaging students when teaching their subjects (García-Galera et al., 2021). This also reflects the increasingly diverse profiles found in university classrooms (Bakay, 2023), as well as the circumstances to which teaching staff must be attentive to ensure that learning is truly meaningful for each of their students (Hasson et al., 2024; Putra, 2026).

The third similarity between Germany and Spain is that their Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of Higher Education are focused on Digital Competences. It is highly likely that these findings stem from one of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic: the rapid acceleration of permanent virtual learning environments (Nicklin et al., 2022; Rof et al. 2022). It is therefore understandable that these Erasmus+ projects in both countries have focused their efforts on designing training for trainers initiatives on how to navigate these digital environments and, at the same time, on how to incorporate digital tools to promote meaningful learning (Mystakidis et al., 2021).

Beyond the pandemic, this finding also reflects the growing integration of AI into educational settings. As this technology becomes more accessible, universities, professors and students are increasingly turning to AI-based tools for a range of academic activities (Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2025). Consequently, it is understandable that these train-the-trainer projects were designed to equip teaching staff with AI skills in areas such as personalised educational content, innovative teaching methods, technology-enhanced assessment and communication with students (Petrova, 2026). Therefore, continuing to build university teaching staff AI literacy appears set to remain a strategic priority within higher education institutions.

On the other hand, the main difference between Germany and Spain lies in the third area to which their Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of Higher Education are dedicated. Germany has focused its efforts on Administrative Competences. From 1999 to the present day, the German higher education sector has been transforming from a more traditional model of academic self-regulation towards more innovative approaches to public management, evaluative governance and labour market orientation (Sziegat, 2022). This national debate on the efficiency, competitiveness and governance of its public higher education institutions is reflected in the Erasmus+ Programme. German universities have used funds from the Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships to ensure that their teaching staff are also involved in efforts to modernise the

management and governance of their institutions, with the ultimate aim of improving their competitiveness at national level and increasing their international visibility.

In the case of Spain, where the political agenda focuses on equity and access as the cornerstones of its higher education strategy, there is a greater number of projects dedicated to Social Inclusion Competences. According to other research, it is becoming increasingly necessary for teaching staff to have the knowledge and tools required to adapt to the needs of students with disabilities (Fernández-Batanero et al., 2022), with a migrant background (Vigren et al., 2022), with different language skills (Natasya & Kembaren, 2025) or from disadvantaged contexts (Majcík & Obrovská, 2025). In this regard, it is worth noting that Spain is the preferred destination for university students undertaking an Erasmus exchange programme (Eurostat, 2023). It is therefore understandable that Spanish universities have committed to training of trainers initiatives focused on developing Social Inclusion Competences.

Combined, these two findings enable this study to make a contribution that goes beyond a simple thematic inventory. Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education have not only served as a mechanism for developing the competences of university teaching staff, but have also been used as tactical tools to align training initiatives with broader national and institutional agendas. In other words, the thematic priorities of the good practices identified can be interpreted as an indicator of the structural challenges currently facing higher education systems in Germany and Spain. It can therefore be inferred that the training of trainer initiatives are not an end in itself, but rather a response by universities to address the current pressures on higher education in terms of modernisation, digitalisation and inclusion.

Furthermore, the current challenges facing society cannot be tackled from a single perspective or by a single actor. In such a scenario, it seems unlikely that universities could tackle social challenges (Žalėnienė & Pereira, 2021) and technological advances (Benavides et al., 2020) on their own, as this could be a losing battle even before it begins. Given this, it is understandable that Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of Higher Education in both countries were formed by a consortium of between 3 and 5 institutions. Moreover, German and Spanish higher education institutions prefer to involve their Italian counterparts as their preferred partner. Moreover, there are differences in that German universities collaborate more with Dutch universities, whilst Spanish universities do so with Portuguese ones. In this regard, linguistic, geographical and cultural proximity may play a determining role in the selection of institutions with which universities prefer to engage with when developing projects lasting more than two years.

In line with the previous point, it is also worth noting that the higher education sector in the EU is not entirely uniform. This means that some countries

invest more public resources in their educational institutions, others focus more on achieving high participation rates, and in others neither of these scenarios is feasible (Bertoletti et al., 2022). An example of this is that Germany funded a greater number of projects with budgets of between 300 001 and 500 000 euros, whilst Spain focused more on those with a budget of between 150 001 and 300 000 euros. This finding could reflect differences in administrative capacity, both within National Agencies and universities, to manage consortia and budgets of varying sizes (Hénard et al., 2012). This difference, which has persisted for over a decade, suggests that this is not an isolated finding, but rather a consistent pattern across the entire set of good practices analysed. According to Nakrošis et al. (2023), the implementation of European policies in each Member State is determined by national factors rather than by the conditions imposed by the EU. Therefore, it is understood that the DAAD and the SEPIE give priority to projects that best reflect the reality of their respective countries, and that German and Spanish universities design their projects based on the budgets they know will be approved and funded.

Turning to the study's limitations, this research has certain constraints that merit acknowledgement. The first is that the findings have been derived exclusively from secondary sources. This means that only a superficial overview of Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of Higher Education in Germany and Spain has been obtained. Although it provides a valuable initial overview, it must be acknowledged that it has not been possible to determine or explore in depth all the details of why the DAAD selected 72 projects and the SEPIE 73 as examples of good practice. Similarly, it has not been possible to assess the experience of the university teaching staff who have led or participated in these train-the-trainer projects, nor the impact these have had on their teaching work.

A second limitation is that the results cannot be generalised or extrapolated to the entire Erasmus+ Programme or to the higher education sector in both countries. This is because the study has focused solely on a very specific sub-action of that programme. In this regard, it is worth noting that universities may also lead Strategic Partnerships or Strategic Cooperations within the fields of School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education, Youth or Sport. Although these areas of activity are not, in principle, typical of higher education institutions, it is possible that there may also be other train-the-trainer projects that universities have carried out and which have not been covered in this study.

The limitations outlined above open up avenues for future research. With regard to the first, it is considered necessary to conduct semi-structured interviews with technical staff from the DAAD and SEPIE in order to gain first-hand insight into why they have specifically chosen these Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships within the field of Higher Education as success projects. These same interviews could also be extended to the German and Spanish universities that coordinated these initiatives, with the aim of exploring in greater depth the characteristics that have led to their projects being considered good practices.

A second line of research is to expand the study sample to include those Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships projects from other fields of the Erasmus+ Programme that have been led by higher education institutions in both countries. In addition to obtaining a more representative sample, it would also be possible to compare whether, across all areas, train-the-trainer projects in Germany and Spain focus on developing the same competences in their teaching staff.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research show that higher education institutions in Germany and Spain demonstrated strong commitment to the Erasmus+ Programme. This is because they have utilised their Strategic and Cooperation Partnerships in the field of Higher Education to design train-the-trainer projects aimed at updating, developing and refreshing the competences of their teaching staff. This is supported by the fact that both countries are among the top three with good practices within this sub-action of the Erasmus+ Programme. At the same time, this distinction awarded by the DAAD and SEPIE highlights the excellent work of German and Spanish universities in identifying their needs, updating their infrastructure, understanding their teaching staff and responding to the challenges of today's society.

In the same line, teaching and learning processes, particularly at university level, will continue to evolve at an accelerating pace in the coming years. There will be an increasing need for train-the-trainer projects that enable teaching staff to reflect on their teaching practice, review their teaching styles, learn about alternative approaches and update their competences. In this regard, it will be essential for higher education institutions not only to listen to the demands of their teaching staff, but also to translate those needs into programmes that enable them to address the social transformations that are taking place, and which will continue to take place in the future.

Finally, the study highlights that the Erasmus+ Programme remains one of the most important EU policies within the field of Higher Education. Nevertheless, there is still a scarcity of research that delves into the impacts this initiative has had on the European education area, and even fewer studies that focus their analysis on train-the-trainer projects in Germany and Spain. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will contribute to opening up this line of research, as well as encourage further reflection on this topic, which is so important not only for higher education but for society as a whole.

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