DOit!

DO IT Guidelines
HOW TO develop a blended intensive programme

BIP manual

Developed by VSB-Technical University of Ostrava, Faculty of Economics

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Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

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INTRODUCTION

Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) are innovative short-term mobility initiatives introduced in the Erasmus+ programme for 2021-2027. They combine short-term physical mobility with a mandatory virtual component, aiming to enhance international collaboration and provide new learning opportunities.

BIPs are based on the concept of Blended Learning. Blended Learning has gained attention due to COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and helped to maintain the learning process during lock-downs. The solutions and technologies developed to support digital education continued after pandemic, to use this remarkable opportunity of digital transformation in education. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) defines blended learning as the combination of digital (on-line) learning with traditional face-to-face teaching and learning methods. A student could benefit from thoughtful integration of on-line and onsite experience [Garrison and Kanauka, 2004]. Blended learning could be also a foundation for more formal educational programmes [Arnett and Cooney, 2022]

Blended Learning is well suited to developing international cooperation, and could be effectively employed in international collaborative project-based learning. BIPs offered as an innovative component of the Erasmus+ programme represent the most formalised cooperation based on the concept of Blended Learning. Blended learning in BIPs involves integrating virtual learning experiences with intensive face-to-face sessions, allowing for a more flexible and accessible international education experience, as a part of ECTS system. This approach is particularly valuable for developing skills required in a global environment, such as intercultural competence and communication skills in education.

This handbook is dedicated to help those who wish to experience the benefits of Blended Learning, while organising BIPs in the Erasmus+ framework. It provides a comprehensive overview of BIPs, by explaining what the BIPs are, offering some tips helpful in BIPs organisation, as well as suggesting some interesting resources. We believe this handbook offers

WHAT ARE THE BLENDED INTENSIVE PROGRAMMES (BIPs)?

BIPs are short, intensive programs that combine short-term physical mobility with a mandatory virtual component for collaborative online learning.

BIPs aim to:

- **Offer innovative ways of learning and teaching**

- **Support international and interdisciplinary courses for students**

- **Promote teamwork to address new challenges**

- **Develop new subjects and courses in the form of blended mobility**

There are also other benefits of the BIPs, at institutional level. BIPs help to strengthen international collaboration at international level, which may in turn lead to new collaborative initiatives. BIPs experience could also increase the interest of longer-term mobilities. In turn, BIPs could significantly increase the level of internationalisation of the involved partnering institutions.

The BIPs organised within the Erasmus+ programme must fulfil pre-defined criteria of eligibility.

These criteria are outlined in Box No 1 and reflect the number of participants, the duration of BIP programme, participating organisations, as well as the credits for students. The Erasmus+ BIP offers also the possibility to organise the BIP for HEIs staff who will undergo BIP-based training. Another relevant issue is the financing offered in Erasmus+ BIPs. Specific rules apply to the institution coordinating the BIP, and for the sending institutions, as outlined in Box No 2.

Box 1 - Key features of Erasmus+ BIPs

- **Participants:** students enrolled at HEIs; number: **Minimum 15, maximum 20 funded participants** (excluding teaching and training staff and local participants) - rules specific for 2021-2023 Calls, within the later calls, please refer to a relevant Erasmus+ guide for the specific Call

- **Duration: Physical activity of 5-30 days, plus a virtual component** (duration not specified)

- **Participating Organizations: At least 3 higher education institutions from 3 different Erasmus+ programme countries**

- **Credits: Students must earn at least 3 ECTS credits**

RELEVANT RESOURCES:

Erasmus+ Programme Guide (2025) https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-11/erasmus-programme-guide-2025_en.pdf

Updates available at: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-programme-guide

Box No 2 - BIP Financing

✓ **for Coordinating institution:**

400 € / participant, maximum 20 funded participants, (excluding trainers and participants from the Partner, Country and coordinating institution)

Defined catalogue of the eligible costs that cover: organization of the program (management and administration, including documents and educational materials, or translations), costs of the social programme, rental of premises and equipment, preparatory visits.

✓ **for Sending institutions:**

Scholarship for BIPs participants, paid for on-site component, in the daily rates of 79 EUR/day (for short stays - up to 14 days), and 56 EUR (for longer stays - 15-30 days)

+ travel days, possibly Green Erasmus, for participants with special needs, this amount may be increased accordingly.

Box 3 - Organising a BIP - checklist

1. Design the curriculum: Develop an innovative curriculum that combines virtual and physical components, focusing on interdisciplinary approaches and challenge-based learning.

2. Establish Partnerships: Form collaborations with at least two other higher education institutions from different Erasmus+ programme countries (in total 3 partners, which is the minimum requirement) Tip/hint for organizers: plan with 4 or 5 organizations in case something unexpected happens

3. Budgeting: Apply for funding through the Erasmus+ KA131 project. The coordinating institution can request Organizational Support (OS) of €400 per participant, up to €8000 Note: this is done by the Institutional Coordinator for Erasmus - it is necessary to cooperate with the International Office at your home institution

4. **Implementation**: Organize the virtual component and the short-term physical mobility, ensuring a balance between academic content and intercultural experiences.

1. ADMINISTRATION OF BIP step by step – for organizers:

Do not forget to create a team – you will need more people than just you. A teacher or academic to be responsible for the BIP content and learning outcomes, also a project and financial manager will be a big help and do not forget the international office or people responsible for Erasmus mobilities (International office, study department etc.).

1. **Application Submission**

   ✓ Plan ahead - the university must apply for the BIP at least one year in advance. Ask at the relevant authority to be sure you can start with the organization and ensure all required documentation is complete and submitted to the relevant authority – e.g. University International Office, faculty/university management

2. **Approval and Planning**

   ✓ Begin planning activities, including resource allocation, scheduling, and identifying responsible staff or departments.

3. **Integration into University Systems**

   ✓ Incorporate the BIP into the university's academic and administrative systems – do not forget, that the BIP has to be registered in the Beneficiary Module
   ✓ Update course catalogues, schedules, and online platforms as necessary – if you organize a BIP for students, they have to be awarded the ECTS credits (between 3 to 5) – this can be complicated at some institutions, make sure you can guarantee receiving the credits for students
   ✓ Assign credits in line with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) or an equivalent framework.

4. **Participant Guidance**

   ✓ Provide detailed information to participants, including:
      ➢ Programme structure
      ➢ Learning objectives
      ➢ Preparatory requirements
      ➢ Logistical details (e.g., travel, accommodation, and deadlines)

5. **Reporting and Feedback**

   ✓ Ask the participants about the feedback – have a questionnaire ready for them evaluating the content, social activities, administration etc. Be ready to prepare your own report from the organizer´s point of view for your home institution – it will be included in the general Erasmus report. Take pictures as documentation, save financial documents, attendance sheets and all the necessary forms.

2. DESIGNING BIP CURRICULUM

BIP requires developing an innovative curriculum that combines virtual and physical components, focusing on interdisciplinary approaches and challenge-based learning. The duration of on-site component is defined (5-30 days), while the on-line component duration is not set. Box 4 provides some key points to cover, while considering learning outcomes, structure of the programme and curriculum. Box 5 offers some useful practical tips. Several examples of BIPs curricula are provided in the Appendix.

Box 4: BIP curriculum checklist

➔ **Establish clear, measurable learning outcomes** that align with the programme's focus and the needs of participating institutions.

➔ **Ensure objectives encompass both academic content and the development of intercultural competencies.**

➔ **Align objectives with the European Qualifications Framework** (EQF) to facilitate credit recognition.

➔ **Structure the curriculum**

➔ **Design a programme lasting between 5 to max. 30 days** for the physical mobility component, considering the optimal duration for your specific topic and target group.

➔ **Develop a complementary virtual component** that enhances and extends the learning experience, including pre-mobility preparation and post-mobility follow-up activities.

➔ **Ensure the programme awards at least 3 ECTS credits** to participants, clearly outlining how these credits are earned and assessed.

Create a Balanced Curriculum

➔ **Incorporate a mix** of lectures, workshops, group projects; incorporate interactive elements,

➔ **Include challenge-based learning elements** where transnational teams tackle real-world problems,

➔ **Design pre-mobility virtual activities** to prepare students for the intensive on-site experience, including intercultural communication workshops and topic-specific introductory modules.

➔ **Balance academic content with cultural and social activities**: Include cultural exchanges and team-building exercises to foster connections among participants, promote holistic learning and intercultural understanding. tip: do not forget to include free time for participants as well, as this time is the best opportunity to cooperate, get deeper in the topic and learn from each other

➔ **Consider diversity and inclusiveness** of your programme: ensure your programme covers different learning styles and cultural backgrounds to enhance the learning experience

Box 5: Practical tips for crafting a good BIP curriculum

➜ **review examples of successful BIP programs**, to get some inspiration on how to incorporate challenge-based learning and study visits to solve real-life problems

e.g. SustainableLogistics4Climate , Open Innovation Lab: Using design thinking to solve regional challenges of Climate Change https://cecc.ue.katowice.pl/bip-2023/

e.g. VSB-TUO Ostrava BIP on "Leadership and Sustainability in CSR. https://www.vsb.cz/en/news-detail/?reportId=46301

➜ **imagine on how to organise a mix of on-site and on-line activities**, to fit the content and idea of your programme, and ensure smooth collaboration with students

➜ **explore the resources** that help effective on-line teaching and learning methods (e.g. DANTE https://www.ekf.vsb.cz/dante/en/)

➜ **recognize the importance of the cultural and social part** of the on-site component: recognise the local options of offering some real-life experience for BIP participants, plan socialising and ice-breaking activities

➜ **Incorporate interactive elements in the virtual component** to maintain engagement

3. PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Once you have the idea for the BIP and a draft of the curriculum, you need to find partners for this endeavour. The Erasmus+ programme specifies some requirements regarding the number of participants and these criteria must be fulfilled to obtain Erasmus+ funding.

Box 6: Partnership and collaboration checklist

Organizer

➔ create a good team on the organizational side, cover the teachers/academics, mobility department, international office, project and financial manager. Also a help from local students is more than welcome.

Communication strategy

➔ Create a comprehensive communication plan for promoting the BIP to potential participants and partner institutions.

➔ Prepare Information Materials: develop clear and engaging information materials outlining the BIP's objectives, structure, and benefits

➔ Create a dedicated webpage or brochure with all relevant information for prospective participants, utilize various channels including social media, institutional websites, and international education fairs.

Partners

➔ Search for at least two other higher education institutions from different Erasmus+ programme countries, to become your partners. Tip: create a consortium of 4 or 5 partner universities - this can be helpful if some partner is not able to fullfill the agreed requirements and resigns from the project

➔ Clearly define roles and responsibilities for each partner institution, including content development, student selection, and assessment procedures.

➔ Create a memorandum of understanding outlining the commitments and expectations of each partner.

➔ Establish clear processes for credit recognition and transfer with your partners, provide detailed documentation of learning outcomes and assessment criteria to facilitate credit recognition at home institutions.

Students:

➔ Aim for a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 20 funded participants (excluding teaching staff). From 2024 Call the minimum number of participants is 10.

➔ Develop a selection process that ensures diversity in terms of academic backgrounds, nationalities, and study cycles.

➔ Consider including local students to enhance the intercultural experience.

However, there are other aspects that need to be considered while establishing partnership and collaboration for successful organisation of the BIPs. These are listed below in Box no 6, followed by a handful of practical tips outlined in Box 7.

Box 7: Practical tips for building successful partnership and collaboration

➔   **Ask International Office staff to help** to identify and head the potential partners of the BIP.

➔   **Start planning early:** at least 6-8 months in advance to ensure smooth coordination with partner institutions

➔   **Establish and use regular communication channels** with partners and participants to keep everyone informed and engaged (ongoing communication)

➔   **Establish clear processes for course integration and student enrollment** within your institution's existing systems. Explain how you will ensure credit recognition with your partners.

➔   **Be open-minded for partners' suggestions** regarding the BIP curriculum adjustments, as well as their specific needs. Discuss the duration of on-site and on-line components, technical aspects (e.g. platforms to be used).

➔   **Register the BIP in the Erasmus + system** and **regularly monitor the registration** of the participants (students)

4. BUDGETING

The Erasmus+ offers specified funding for the coordinator of the BIP and the participants, which was specified in Box 2. However, while planning the BIP budget, some activities shall be taken to secure the funding, by following administrative duties. The checklist is provided in Box 8.

Box 8: Budgeting checklist

Secure Funding

�➔ Apply for funding through the Erasmus+ KA131 project, clearly outlining the BIP's objectives and expected outcomes, study the rules and familiarise yourself with the funding eligibility criteria.

➔ Ensure the min. number of participants required to obtain the funding (15-20)

➔ Clearly communicate funding arrangements to all partners, explain the specifics, assist in the understanding of specifics of the participants scholarships scheme.

Create budget plan

➔ Plan in detail how the budget will be allocated to ensure the organisation of the BIP, in particular - the funding needed for organisation of the on-side component, including the cultural and social activities

➔ Help your partners to coordinate travel arrangements for participants, providing clear instructions and support.

➔ Ensure all necessary documentation (e.g., learning agreements, grant agreements) is completed and processed in a timely manner.

➔ Establish a clear communication channel for addressing administrative queries from participants and partner institutions.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

The successful implementation of the BIP requires an involvement of all partners, under the guidance of the coordinator. In particular, coordinator holds the responsibility for the successful organisation of the on-site component, including all technical arrangements. The collaboration while organising the on-line component enables more balanced duties and responsibilities of each partner. In Box no 11 the checklist of major activities in the BIP implementation is specified, while Box no 10 provides some useful practical tips within.

Box 10: Practical tips for successful implementation of the BIP

➜ Provide comprehensive pre-departure information, including technical requirements, cultural preparation, and academic expectations.

➜ Ensure adequate technical support is available throughout the programme, particularly during virtual components.

➜ Consider time zone differences when scheduling virtual components and plan accordingly.

➜ Be prepared to adapt and make changes based on participant feedback and unforeseen circumstances.

Box 9: Practical tips for successful budgeting of the BIP

➜   Start planning earlier the costs of organisation of the on-site component - recognise the necessary expenditures, check the cost of the options of cultural and social activities, build scenarios

➜   Constantly monitor the number of registered participants, verify their eligibility for scholarship, based on this information count your potential budget

➜   Clearly communicate funding arrangements to all partners to avoid misunderstandings and ensure smooth financial management .

Box 11: Implementation checklist

Develop Digital Learning Components

➜ Select appropriate online platforms and tools for virtual collaboration, such as Google, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom.

➜ Create engaging online content, including pre-recorded lectures, interactive workshops, and discussion forums, in collaboration with the partners

➜ Develop clear guidelines for students on how to navigate the virtual learning environment.

Plan Physical Mobility technicalities

➜ Prepare a detailed schedule for the physical mobility period, including academic sessions, group work, and cultural activities.

➜ Conduct pre-program orientation: Organize virtual meetings to familiarize participants with the program structure and tools before the official start of the on-site component.

➜ Organize accommodations, local transportation, and facilities for on-site activities

Facilitate Cultural Exchange

➜ Incorporate cultural activities and excursions into the programme, such as city tours or visits to historical sites.

➜ Arrange site visits to relevant industries or organizations to provide real-world context

➜ Encourage informal networking opportunities among participants, such as welcome dinners or cultural evenings.

➜ Assign intercultural tasks or projects that require collaboration between students from different countries.

Plan Quality and assurance Establish Evaluation Mechanisms

➜ Develop surveys and feedback forms for participants and staff to be completed at various stages of the programme.

➜ Implement ongoing evaluation throughout the programme to allow for real-time adjustments.

Facilitate Follow-up and dissemination

➜ Design follow-up virtual activities to reinforce learning outcomes and maintain connections between participants.

➜ Encourage participants to share their BIP experiences through presentations or workshops at their home institutions.

➜ Document and share best practices and lessons learned with the wider academic community.

➜ Consider presenting outcomes at international education conferences or in publications.

➜ Develop case studies or success stories to inspire and guide future BIP organizers.

➜ Integrate BIP outcomes into broader curriculum development initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) represent a significant evolution in the Erasmus+ framework, showcasing the potential of blended learning to enhance international collaboration and education. By combining virtual learning with short-term physical mobility, BIPs provide a flexible and innovative approach to fostering global competencies, interdisciplinary learning, and cultural exchange.

Through this handbook, we have outlined the essential steps for successful BIP implementation, including curriculum design, partnership development, budgeting, and administration. Additionally, the program's integration into the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) ensures academic rigor and recognition, making BIPs a valuable asset for both students and institutions.

Despite challenges such as credit recognition and coordination across time zones, the positive outcomes—including enhanced intercultural and digital competencies—far outweigh the difficulties. The collaborative nature of BIPs not only enriches the learning experience for participants but also strengthens institutional partnerships and internationalization efforts.

This handbook aims to empower educators and administrators to embrace BIPs as a transformative educational tool, driving innovation and inclusivity in higher education. By adopting the principles and best practices detailed herein, institutions can contribute to the shared goal of a globally interconnected and digitally adept academic community.

Appendix:
Summary of typical BIP structures, activities, experiences, and feedback:

Typical BIP Programme Structure

1. Duration: 5-30 days of physical mobility

2. Virtual component: Pre- and/or post-mobility online collaboration

3. Participants: Minimum 15 students from at least 3 different countries

4. Credits: Minimum 3 ECTS

Common Activities

- Lectures by expert speakers

- Workshops and seminars

- Group projects and presentations

- Site visits to relevant industries or organizations

- Cultural excursions

- Networking events

- Virtual collaboration sessions

Experiences and Feedback

A) Positive Aspects:

- Enhanced intercultural competencies

- Improved digital skills

- Increased student engagement

- Opportunity for international collaboration

- Cost-effective alternative to longer mobility programs

- Flexibility in program design

B) Challenges

- Ensuring consistent credit recognition

- Managing technical issues during virtual components

- Balancing academic content with cultural experiences

- Coordinating across different time zones

Student Feedback

- Appreciation for the intensive, focused nature of the program

- Valued the opportunity to work with international peers

- Enjoyed the blend of academic and cultural experiences

- Found the virtual component helpful for pre- and post-mobility engagement

Organizer Feedback

- Reported higher levels of student participation compared to traditional programs

- Appreciated the flexibility in designing innovative curricula

- Noted improved digital competencies for both students and staff

- Highlighted the positive impact on internationalization efforts

Appendix: A brief summary of the experiences of the BIP Organizers:

➔   Organizers report higher levels of student participation and interaction in BIPs compared to traditional exchange programs

➔   Improved digital skills: Both students and staff develop stronger digital competencies through the virtual component of BIPs

➔   Increased accessibility: BIPs have allowed for broader participation, including students who may not have been able to engage in traditional mobility programs

➔   Challenges in time management: Coordinating across different time zones for virtual components has been reported as a common challenge

➔   Positive impact on internationalization: BIPs have contributed to strengthening international partnerships and fostering new collaborations between institutions

➔   Flexibility in program design: the ability to tailor programs to specific academic needs and current global issues

➔   Cost-effectiveness: The blended format has allowed for more efficient use of resources while still providing an international experience

➔   Enhanced intercultural competencies: participants report significant improvements in their ability to work in diverse, international teams

➔   Challenges in credit recognition: Some organizers have faced difficulties in ensuring uniform credit recognition across all participating institutions

➔   Challenging search for partners and participants:

➔   Fostering administrative barriers: controlling of eligibility of costs

➔   Organizing team should include teacher/academic responsible for the learning content and learning outcomes, project coordinator who overviews the whole project, financial manager to take care of the financial issues and budget and a mobility coordinator (usually from the international relations/mobility office to administrate the participants mobility

➔   Do not forget the promotion, feedback and evaluation and dissemination with final report and photos

Appendix: Students feedback: reflections and lessons learned

Student Reflection: *"The BIP on 'Networking and International Career Planning' at Vilnius Business College was an eye-opening experience. I appreciated the blend of online preparation and intensive on-site activities. The cultural program in Vilnius and Trakai added significant value to our academic learning."*

Lesson Learned: Integrating cultural experiences with academic content enhances the overall learning experience and promotes intercultural understanding.

Student Reflection: *"During the 'SustainableLogistics4Climate' BIP at the University of Economics in Katowice, I was impressed by how well the virtual component prepared us for the on-site week. The online collaboration with international peers before meeting in person made the physical mobility more productive and engaging."*

Lesson Learned: A well-structured virtual component can significantly enhance the effectiveness of the physical mobility period.

3. Student Reflection: *"The Aalto University BIP on design thinking and product development was intense but rewarding. The three-week format with two weeks of remote study and one week on campus allowed for deep learning without disrupting our entire semester."*

Lesson Learned: Balancing online and on-site components can make intensive programs more accessible and less disruptive to students' regular academic schedules.

4. Student Reflection: *"Participating in the Ulysseus BIP on Multilingualism and Intercultural Competences was transformative. The pre-tasks, such as preparing presentations on our universities and cultures, helped us connect even before meeting in person. The language tandems were particularly enjoyable and effective."*

Lesson Learned: Incorporating participant-led activities and pre-tasks can foster community building and enhance engagement throughout the program.

5. Student Reflection: *"The BIP at Haaga-Helia on Multilingualism and Intercultural Competences created a comfortable environment for sharing perspectives. The sense of community was exceptional, and I felt my intercultural competence significantly improved."*

Lesson Learned: Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment is crucial for fostering open dialogue and meaningful intercultural exchanges in BIPs.

These reflections and lessons highlight the importance of blending academic content with cultural experiences, effective pre-program preparation, balanced online and on-site components, participant engagement, and creating an inclusive learning environment in successful BIP implementations.

Appendix: Examples of good practices and lessons learned

1. VSB-TUO Ostrava's "Leadership and Sustainability in CSR" BIP:

  - **Recommendation:** Incorporate site visits to local industries to provide real-world context. For example, this BIP included visits to steel works and an ice hockey club, demonstrating practical applications of sustainability concepts.

2. University of Economics in Katowice's "SustainableLogistics4Climate" BIP:

  - **Tip:** Clearly communicate funding arrangements to partner institutions. This BIP specified that students receive 70 EUR/day scholarship from Erasmus KA 131 budget, while the organizing institution covers event costs, including social programs and food.

3. University of Vienna's BIP Guidelines:

  - **Recommendation:** Establish clear processes for course integration and student enrollment. The University of Vienna requires BIPs to be established as courses in their directory, with pre-consent from the directorate of studies, ensuring smooth credit recognition and transcript issuance.

Blended Intensive Programme: Leadership and Sustainability in CSR

BIP number: 2022-1-CZ01-KA131-HED-000056416-3....

Coordinator: VSB-Technical University of Ostrava

Partners: SRH HOCHSCHULEN BERLIN GMBH (Germany), Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Helsinki, Finland), … IAE Paris Est School of Management (France)

Organizers feedback:

● The BIP was organised as part of a "rotating BIP" - i.e. with organisations with whom we have already organised BIPs. This has been a great advantage, all the people involved know each other, know what to expect and what is expected of them. All universities also conducted their own selection process for student participation, which saved the organisers work and time.

● Although numbers of students from each school were agreed, the final number was less than the planned 20 - so numbers of participants are never guaranteed. I would recommend considering possible sanctions for partners who do not meet the agreed number of students or directing partners to have not only a list of selected participants but also a list of substitutes in case a student has to cancel the mobility.

● The evaluation of the BIP by both students and partners was positive, all were satisfied with both the teaching programme and the provision of leisure activities, accommodation or meals.

Blended Intensive Programme: Project and Grant Management: From Theory to Practice

BIP number: 2022-1-CZ01-KA131-HED-000056416-4

Coordinator: VSB-Technical University of Ostrava

Partners: Opole University of Technology (Poland), Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary (Hungary) and others

Organizers feedback:

● This BIP (winter school) was open to all students, so the selection procedure was quite demanding. After the selection process, students were informed about the results and some of them stopped the communication. So the organizers struggled with the final number of participants, even if the number of interested students was very high – 54, the selection of 24 students was done according to given criteria. List of selected students was created together with the list of substitutes. But the students did not communicate, so the organizers even thought about canceling the course. Finally we managed to have the required nr. of students. So for next time – we suggest to have cooperation with specific partners who will send the approved number of students – maybe together with a teacher, staff member.

● The BIP started on Sunday with unofficial programme – it is good to have students who will help with this so that the orgnaizers do not need to take care of every second of the programme. We had PhD students who were very helpful – in the social activities, during the lectures and workshops, in the free time.

● From the financial point of view, it is good to apply for some money in advance from the financial department, that can be used to pay the small expenditures. It is good to have invoices, not to pay in cash. And to have a financial/project manager to deal with the financial issues.

Blended Intensive Programme: How to organize a Blended Intensive Programme

BIP number:2022-1-CZ01-KA131-HED-000056416-1

Coordinator: VSB-Technical University of Ostrava

Partners: UNIWERSYTET EKONOMICZNY WE WROCLAWIU (Poland), STICHTING HOGESCHOOL VAN AMSTERDAM (Netherlands), University of Madeira (Portugal)

BIP organized for teachers and staff who would like to organize their own BIP. It contains the introduction to BIP, tips and tricks on organization, content, administrative point of view and networking with other participants.

Organizers feedback:

● we had the minimum number of participants who attended and signed the attendance sheet, nevertheless in the Beneficiary Module - we did not have enough participants, so this BIP was not eligible for funding. TIP: ask the participants to be registered for mobility in the Beneficiary Module BEFORE the BIP starts, so that you have a clue to have the minimum number of participants

● we were struggling with registering the mobilities under the STT - training programme, as some of the participants were teachers who were not eligible to go for STT, only for STA - in this case they are not counted as participants

● think of the possibility of zero-grant participants - we had one - registered in Beneficiary Module, with all the necessary documents, but not paid from Erasmus, she used her own resources to cover the visit

Blended Intensive Programme: Intercultural Competences and Communication Strategies for International Students.

BIP number: 2023-1-PT01-KA131-HED-000125939-2

Coordinator: University of Madeira, Portugal

Partners: Rzeszów University of Technology, Poland, VSB – Technical University of Ostrava, Czechia, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia, Technical University of Košice, Slovakia, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands, University of Debrecen, Hungary, Wrocław University of Business and Ecomomics, Poland

Organizers reflection:

●   From the organizer's perspective, similar financial constraints arose. Hosting an event of this nature in a high-cost location like Madeira required considerable resources. The detailed agenda of the BIP included academic lectures, workshops, and various cultural and social activities, such as visits to tourist sites, dinners at local restaurants, and guided nature walks. These elements were vital for fostering intercultural exchange, yet they significantly increased the overall budget.

●   For example, the program featured off-campus activities, including a lunch at the Clube de Golf Santo da Serra, tourist visits, and multiple meals at the Restaurante Escondidinho. These activities were key to providing students with a well-rounded experience, but they incurred substantial costs. Organizers had to balance these expenses with the limited grant, often resulting in financial strain.

●   Moreover, hosting international lecturers and experts added to the costs. With participants from countries such as Slovakia, the Netherlands, and Hungary, the travel and accommodation expenses for invited professionals further stretched the budget. The organizers faced the challenge of maintaining high standards for both academic content and intercultural activities within the limited financial support.

●   In conclusion, the grant provided by the Erasmus+ program was not sufficient to fully cover the elevated costs associated with holding the BIP on the island of Madeira. Both students and the organizing team faced financial difficulties due to the high cost of living, travel, and accommodation in a tourist-heavy location. To ensure the future success and broader participation in such programs, it is recommended that the financial support for similar events be increased, or that additional local sponsorships be sought. Additionally, negotiating special rates for accommodation and meals with local businesses could help alleviate the financial pressures faced by students and organizers alike

Participants reflection:

●   For participantsfrom participating universities such as Rzeszów University of Technology (Poland), the Technical University of Ostrava (Czech Republic), the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca (Romania), and others, the costs of attending the BIP on the island of Madeira were notably higher than on mainland Europe. As Madeira is a geographically isolated location, travel expenses were significantly elevated, particularly due to the limited direct flights, often requiring costly stopovers.

This situation already posed a financial strain for guests, compounded by the high accommodation and food costs associated with Madeira's status as a popular tourist destination.

● While the Erasmus+ grant covers basic expenses, it does not adequately account for the higher cost of living in Madeira, especially during tourist seasons when accommodation and food prices peak. As a result, participants faced financial pressures despite the academic and intercultural value of the BIP. Meals, transportation, and even self-catering options in this tourist-driven environment added to the overall cost burden.

Blended Intensive Programme: Open Innovation Lab: Using design thinking to solve regional challenges of climate change

BIP number: 2022-1-PL01-KA131-HED-000052226-1

Coordinator: University of Economics in Katowice

Partners: University of Belgrade (Serbia), Silesian University of Opava (Czech Republic), Obuda University (Hungary)

BIP website: https://cecc.ue.katowice.pl/bip-2023/

Organisers Feedback:

-        It was challenging to find partners and participants for the BIP. Although we planned far ahead, we struggled with administrative procedures to the last moment, as it was not certain if our partners are eligible for funding

-        We decided to organise our BIP by starting with an on-site component, followed by on-line project work. It was a very good decision, as we invested in social activities, by this strengthening the spirit of the groups that worked later on together on projects within open innovation lab

-        We were lucky to involve a professor from Italy who holds strong expertise in running an open innovation lab. This is a very interactive, project based and creative method. It made our on-site teaching activities very lively.

Partners Feedback:

-        Bringing students for short-term mobility was very beneficial. Afterwards, we promoted the BIP activities as the alternative for long-term mobilities, which is problematic for our students and a barrier for internationalisation

-        Using the green pass was a nice experience. Longer travel and the adventures on the road created a great opportunity for networking for our students.

-        We liked very much that the organisers planned an inspiration phase, by enabling BIP participants to join a series of lectures and project presentations during a conference organised alongside the BIP, as well as the open innovation lab workshop.

Students Feedback:

-        Students appreciated the formula of open innovation lab based on design thinking method. That experience was very practical, enhanced creativity and collaboration.

-        The short-term mobility was for many the first international experience.

-        Organising the on-line component was challenging. To be able to organise productive meetings with international peers, we needed to plan the meetings in late afternoon hours, which was problematic for some of the students.

Other examples of good practices

Reports from events/BIPs organised by HEIs (not included to DOIT project):

International Peer Learning Activity on Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) held in Vienna in May 2024

Report available at: https://www.algebra.hr/sveuciliste/en/algebra-showcases-good-practices-at-erasmus-bip-peer-learning-activity-in-vienna/

   ✓ **UNITE! SUMMER SCHOOL**

Report available at: https://www.aalto.fi/en/news/what-does-it-take-to-build-a-blended-intensive-programme

   ✓ **BIP: A Cross-Cultural Bridge to Career Opportunities**

Report available at: https://www.kolegija.lt/en/erasmus-blended-intensive-programme-at-vilnius-business-college-a-cross-cultural-bridge-to-career-opportunities/

   ✓ **BIP: Ulysseus Multilingualism and Intercultural Competences**

Report available at: https://esignals.fi/en/category-en/education/organizing-a-successful-blended-intensive-programme-insights-from-the-ulysseus-multilingualism-and-intercultural-competences-bip/

Appendix: List of useful resources about blended mobility programmes that could help in organisation of the BIPs

1.   Blended Mobility Project Website: https://blendedmobility.com/en

This site offers comprehensive information on blended mobility projects.

2.   Blended Mobility Toolkit: https://blendedmobility.com/en/toolkit

A practical toolkit for implementing blended mobility programs.

3.   Guide for Setting Up a Blended Mobility Course:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/rt6vu3r1ssi5f6y/BM_CourseGuide_EN.pdf

This guide provides step-by-step instructions for creating a blended mobility course.

4.   BEST+ (Blended Erasmus+ Staff Training) Project Results:

https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2016-1-ES01-KA203-025594

Information on a successful blended staff training project.

5.   Guidelines for Learning Material for Blended Staff Mobility:

https://uni-foundation.eu/uploads/2018_Guidelines_Blended_Staff_Mobility.pdf

Useful guidelines for developing learning materials for blended mobility.

6.   ACA Think Pieces: Digitalisation in International Higher Education:

https://aca-secretariat.be/publications/list-publication/

Insights on digitalization in international higher education.

7.   EAIE Blog: Mobility:

https://www.eaie.org/blog/category/mobility.html

Articles and resources on international student mobility.

8.   Description of BIP by University of Vienna

https://international.univie.ac.at/en/cooperation-and-networks/blended-intensive-programmes/

Appendix: Some common pitfalls when following a guide for administrative processes related to Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs)

1. Underestimating the time required for planning and coordination. Starting preparations at least 6-8 months in advance is recommended to ensure smooth coordination with partner institutions.

2. Overlooking clear communication strategies. Failing to establish regular communication channels with partners and participants can lead to misunderstandings and coordination issues.

3. Neglecting to provide comprehensive pre-departure information, including technical requirements, expectations, and schedules for both virtual and physical components.

4. Inadequate consideration of time zone differences when scheduling virtual components, which can impact participation and engagement.

5. Insufficient technical support during virtual sessions, potentially disrupting the learning experience.

6. Failing to develop contingency plans for potential disruptions, such as technical failures or travel restrictions.

7. Overlooking the importance of balancing academic content with cultural and social activities to promote holistic learning and intercultural understanding.

8. Inadequate attention to credit recognition processes across participating institutions, which can cause issues for students' academic progress.

9. Underestimating the complexity of coordinating funding arrangements, especially when multiple institutions are involved.

10. Neglecting to incorporate feedback mechanisms and ongoing evaluation throughout the programme, which can hinder real-time improvements and adjustments.

By being aware of these potential pitfalls, organizers can take proactive steps to address them and ensure a more successful implementation of their Blended Intensive Programme.