A SURVEY OF BLENDED INTENSIVE PROGRAMMES

Blended Mobility in European Higher Education

In 2021 the European Commission’s new Erasmus+ Programme introduced Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) which combine phases of online teaching and collaboration with a short period of physical mobility. In February - March 2023 196 academic coordinators of BIPs responded to a survey which aimed to find out how BIPs are being employed in European Higher Education and what the experiences of the coordinators have been to date. This is a brief summary of the main findings. For more information, contact Robert O’Dowd (University of León, Spain; robert.odowd@unileon.es) and Sina Werner (Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany; sina.werner@rub.de).

HOW WAS IT ORGANISED?
The majority of BIPs begin with an online phase followed by a physical mobility phase.

- An online phase followed by a physical mobility phase (61.3%)
- A physical mobility phase followed by an online phase (28.4%)
- Online phase - physical mobility phase - second online phase (8.8%)
- Other (1.5%)

SUBJECTS
BIPs are being carried out across a wide range of subject areas

- Law, economics and social sciences (30.2%)
- Engineering (11.1%)
- Education (13.2%)
- Languages and cultural studies (13.2%)
- STEM (11.1%)
- Art and music (11.6%)
- Medicine and health sciences (9.6%)

WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS?
Having the opportunity to work in international teams (33%)
Developing a professional network (27%)
Developing intercultural skills and an intercultural perspective (23%).
Experiencing new ways of teaching and new perspectives on the subject matter (16%).

WHAT PROBLEMS WERE ENCOUNTERED?
Administrative issues (e.g. excessive bureaucracy, different regulations in different countries) (36%)
Lack of sufficient funding for students' travel and accommodation costs (31%)
Reaching the minimum number of students for the physical mobility (17%)
Finding an appropriate time for online and in-class activities (9%)

HOW WERE STUDENTS REWARDED FOR TAKING PART IN THE BIP?
Mobile students
- 3 ECTS 50%
- between 3-6 ECTS 47%
- more than 6 ECTS 3%

Non-mobile students
- BIP treated as...
  - ... part of their course - 49%
  - ... extra credit - 30%
  - ... voluntary activity - 10%
  - other options - 11%
WHAT GOOD PRACTICES DO COORDINATORS RECOMMEND?

Start planning early

Provide a clear and transparent structure and organisation

Recruit more students than the minimum requirement of 15 students

Involve the international office in planning

Facilitate collaborative & interactive methods (esp. online)

Include social and cultural activities (esp. in physical mobility)

Maintain close communication with partners & students

Develop a good working relationship with your partner teachers and international offices

HOW WAS THE PHYSICAL MOBILITY ORGANISED?

The majority of BIPs had a mobility phase between 5-7 days.

Most popular destinations for the physical mobility:
- Portugal (9%)
- Holland (16%)
- Finland (13%)
- Germany (23%)
- Belgium (10%)
- Italy (8%)
- Spain (9%)

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE CONSIDERED MOST SUITED TO THE ONLINE PHASE?

1. Lectures and other theoretical input
   Introduction to the BIP
2. Online interaction: group work and discussions
3. Practical activities: teambuilding and preparation for physical mobility

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE CONSIDERED MOST SUITED TO THE PHYSICAL MOBILITY?

1. Excursions
   Social and cultural events
2. Workshops
   Group work
3. Lectures
   Seminars

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- Other (16%)

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