

# Blended Intensive Programmes in Practice

## TCA Report

The Icelandic National Agency for Erasmus+ organised a transnational event at Bifrost University from 12 to 14 October, providing an opportunity for around 50 people from 21 countries all over Europe to share experiences and learn from each other about blended intensive programmes in Erasmus+.

Blended intensive programmes include short on-site courses that are combined with online learning and training. They can be designed both for students and university staff and provide a good way to gain international experience, not least for students who for some reason or the other are not able to be abroad for a full semester.

The participants agreed that blended intensive programmes have a great potential and multiple benefits but were also concerned about the various challenges that they had encountered in the preparation, implementation, and follow-up of these courses. These include the following aspects.

### Challenges/suggestions:

- Beneficiaries get different messages from one National Agency to the other because the directions from the European Commission need more clarity and consistency. Too much is left for interpretations.
- Beneficiaries ask for more flexibility when it comes to the funding mechanism, for instance regarding the number of participants.
- The rules of budget transfer – for example between OS BIP and mobility – need to be clear and consistent between calls.
- It would be greatly appreciated if case studies of well-developed and successfully carried out BIPs could be presented and circulated.
- All relevant templates need to be clear, ready before the activities start and available via the system – including the final report form.
- It would be good for National Agencies to be able to create a test application, complete a test/mock report etc. This would help them deal more efficiently with any queries from the beneficiaries.
- Questions to be answered in the final report should be consistent with the application layout - so, the final report will be clear and consistent - it will be easier to make relevant references.
- An information session around BIP delivered by the European Commission would be very welcome - to summarise the main issues etc - as this is a new feature, more guidelines etc would be helpful.
- Physical presence by colleagues from DG EAC in events related to BIP implementation would be highly appreciated.
- The NAs need further information on how and what should be monitored when it comes to BIPs.
- Managing a BIP in Beneficiary Module has been very challenging (for example IDs issues)

During the seminar, the participants shared their ideas on how to tackle obstacles and to set up a successful programme. To this end, the following do's and don'ts were developed:

DO'S	DONT'S
<p>Make both parts (physical and virtual) meaningful</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Set a common tool for the virtual part</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Evaluate what works online and offline</p> <p>Secure the number of participants (and have a waiting list)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Overestimate number of students in case of dropouts</p> <p>Find (engage) people ready to work with you</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Use your existing partners</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Choose your partner wisely</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Explain funding / grant rules</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Spend time in preparation</p> <p>Make course attractive enough for marketing and be in time to promote it</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Target the right audience</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Start with existing courses</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Provide necessary support for participants</p> <p>Have clear roles and responsibilities and have a BIP coordinator</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Have clear goals and vision</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Make a timeline</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Make a handbook with a timeline, content, deadlines, a-z</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Introduce BIPs at your institution</p> <p>Engage your partners (have meetings and one point of contact from each partner)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Engage students at an early stage</p> <p>Have a follow up / feedback from teachers and students</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Include a social programme</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Develop a Plan B</p> <p>Accommodate students in the same place (also local students)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Include info about safety</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Have a fact sheet with info (QR code)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Celebrate the success!</p>	<p>Don't just repeat same thing twice in different formats (virtual vs. physical)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Don't overlook the virtual component</p> <p>Don't treat it as a regular yearly mobility</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Don't plan last minute</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Don't stress over perfection</p> <p>Don't apply funding if you don't have a clear picture of your project</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Don't do it for the money</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Don't rush</p> <p>Don't underestimate the added work hours for both teachers and admin staff</p> <p>Don't assume prior knowledge from partners</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Don't forget the students</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Don't forget IT</p> <p>Don't forget other departments (admission, student registration)</p> <p>Don't assume there is just one answer to a question</p>



According to a survey sent to participants after the event, there was general satisfaction with the two intensive days at Bifrost. 72% were very satisfied with the seminar, and the remaining 28% were satisfied. The most positive outcomes for those who attended included meeting European partners, getting project ideas, intercultural learning and getting to know good practices. In fact, 94% said that they would organise a blended programme following the seminar. The event succeeded in building bridges between countries in this regard, because one half of the participants found new partners to work with on blended mobility in the future.

On behalf of the Icelandic National Agency,

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