

Blended Intensive Programmes and blended mobility within Erasmus+ KA131 action

**Frequently asked questions compiled from NACOs and Teams questions
For use by NAs**

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Blended intensive programmes – BIPs

1. Who receives the BIP organisational support?

The coordinating higher education institution that applies for the BIP OS receives the funding. It is up to the institutions that are organising the BIP to decide how the amount is shared between them. All institutions that send participants to BIPs should fund them as per the regular funding rules.

2. What can the BIP organisational support be used for?

The BIP-OS is not to be used to fund any mobilities. The BIP OS is not to be used as a top-up to the individual support.

The BIP partnership can provide certain services for free to participants or subsidise a part of the expenses for the participants but they have to avoid double funding from Erasmus+ funds.

Organisational support for BIPs is intended to cover costs related to the preparation, design, development, implementation and follow-up of the programme and delivery of virtual/remote activities as well as the overall management and coordination. Costs may include: production of documents or educational material, rental of rooms, rental of equipment, field trips, excursions, communication activities, translation and interpretation, preparatory visits and administrative tasks.

3. What are the different roles in the BIP partnership?

Every partner in the BIP partnership has to be involved in developing and implementing the programme and every partner has to have a role in either receiving or sending participants, except if they are just coordinating.

The coordinating HEI coordinates the organisation, receives and manages the organisational support for the blended intensive programme. The coordinating HEI is by default the receiving HEI (host) for the student and staff mobility, unless otherwise decided by the partnership.

In addition to the (main) receiving HEI, there may also be a co-hosting organisation. This organisation can be an enterprise, another HEI, association or public body (in the same country) hosting participants for practical training as part of the programme.

The receiving HEI, awarded with an ECHE, receives the BIP participants either at its premises or at a different venue/hosting organisation in the same country in which it is located.

A sending HEI can be any HEI from the blended intensive programme partnership or outside it. It can be expected that the majority of participants come from sending HEIs which are part of the partnership. Invited staff can come from any organisation in Programme Countries. The coordinating institution can be a sending institution too if the venue of the activity is in another country.

In exceptional cases the role of sending institution can include an HEI that is “sending” a teacher to teach, in person or virtually, without sending any learners.

4. Who counts towards the minimum of 15 participants for the BIP to be eligible for funding?

HEIs are encouraged to plan BIPs with more than 15 learner participants to be sure that the programmes remain eligible for BIP-OS funding even if some participants drop out.

The BIPs were designed to allow the BIP partners to send learner participants on a blended course within the partnership and therefore it is expected that at least 15 learner participants come from HEIs within the partnership. However, this is not a hard requirement so some of that minimum number of learner participants can come from other ECHE-holding HEIs outside of the partnership if the situation calls for it.

Zero-grant participants can count towards the minimum of 15 as they are considered Erasmus+ funded participants. The beneficiary organisations receive OS funding for the Erasmus+ mobilities even if the students are zero-grant students.

Learners who are already on mobility at the HEI that is hosting the BIP, for studies or a traineeship or teaching, can participate in the programme as local participants and do therefore not count towards the minimum requirement of 15 Erasmus+ funded participants.

Participants from third countries not associated to the Programme do not count towards the minimum requirement of 15 participants in the BIP.

5. Is a BIP eligible if there is only one HEI sending learner participants?

BIPs should preferably include learners from at least three HEIs from three EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme so it is strongly recommended that there are Erasmus+ mobile learner participants from more than one HEI taking part so that the BIP participants have a more international experience.

6. Can the teaching staff of the BIP come from third countries not associated to the Programme?

Teaching and training staff involved in the delivery of the BIP can come from third countries not associated to the Programme if they are funded by KA171 funding. Note that the minimum duration of physical mobility for staff in KA171 is 5 days instead of 1 day of KA131.

7. Who signs learning agreements, inter-institutional agreements and issues transcripts for the BIP?

The receiving institution, whether it is coordinating institution or not, should always be the one to sign IIAs, learning agreements and mobility agreements and issue transcripts of records or certificates of attendance.

8. Can HEIs transfer unused BIP-OS funds to other budget categories?

HEIs are allowed to transfer 100% of the allocated BIP OS funds to other budget categories. Unused BIP OS funds can occur either because the BIP did not take place or there were fewer mobile learners than anticipated.

It is to be noted that not organising BIPs while funding was awarded in the mobility project will be negatively reflected in the calculations of the past performance in future KA131 grant allocations by the National Agencies. There is no negative impact if the HEI returns unused BIP-OS during the interim report stage or if there are justified reasons why the BIP could not take place. HEIs need to explain why the BIP was not realised in their final reports and it is up to the NA to see whether the reasons are justified.

9. Can an incoming student be sent to another country by their receiving institution to take part in a BIP or another short-term mobility?

A student is not eligible to be sent on another mobility to take part in a BIP by his receiving HEI. If the students want to participate in a BIP that is organised in another country then their home institution has to nominate/send them to that BIP separately.

To be eligible for Erasmus+ mobilities, students have to be registered in a HEI and enrolled in studies leading to a recognised degree or another recognised tertiary level qualification.

Therefore students who are already on a long-term mobility abroad are not eligible participants in mobility activities outside the host country organised by their receiving institution.

10. Can the same BIP can be organised several times during one project if the BIP is not financed?

An HEI can apply for funding (grant item/budget category “blended intensive programme organisational support”, BIP-OS in short) for only one edition of the same BIP (with the same title, learning outcomes and partnership composition) per call year. Coordinators can reapply under the following call for the same BIP in order to receive funding (BIP-OS) for it.

A blended short-term mobility can be undertaken to any receiving organisation, independent from the existence of a BIP.

If HEIs want to organise the same BIP (with the same title, learning outcomes and partnership) more times within the same KA131 project under the same call year (including a rotation of the coordinator), they will not be eligible to receive additional Erasmus+ funding (BIP-OS) for a further edition. Therefore, further editions of the BIP will not be recorded in the programme support tools (Beneficiary Module BM, PMM).

If the BIP partnership wants to organise “BIP-style short courses” within the same call year they can still send participants to the receiving HEI hosting the short course through Erasmus+ blended short-term mobility and record it in the BM as a stand-alone mobility.

“Zero-grant” BIPs (i.e., without a BIP-OS but a BIP that would be recorded in the programme support tools) are not envisaged for the moment. (see Handbook pp. 12-13).

11. What happens if a BIPs does not have 15 learner participants? Can the partnership keep the BIP-OS?

The minimum number of learner participants should always be 15, in line with the rules of the Programme Guide. If some of the 15 participants have to attend virtually due to force majeure (e.g. Covid), the coordinating HEI can still receive the BIP-OS.

If the BIP does not get enough applicants then the BIP is not eligible for funding.

Furthermore, it is not possible for one BIP to take place at two occasions in the same project to reach the minimum of 15 participants (10 participants present physically one week and 5 during another week). The minimum 15 participants should be physically present together at one event.

Blended mobility:

12. Can the sending institution be responsible for the virtual component in a blended mobility?

It is the receiving institution that is responsible for the virtual component, in the same way it is responsible for delivering the physical classes. The virtual activities should also be in consistency with, or a reinforcement/continuation of the physical activities and therefore the same institution should be in charge of both.

13. In the cases of blended staff mobility for teaching does the "at least 8 teaching hours per week" limit have to be taken into account for whole mobility period (physical and virtual part) or just for the physical part of the mobility?

The same rules apply for fully physical mobilities and blended mobilities and the number of teaching hours should be 8 hours per week. If the mobility lasts longer than one week, the minimum number of teaching hours for an incomplete week should be proportional to the duration of that week.

If the teaching activity is combined with a training activity during a single period abroad, the minimum number of hours of teaching per week (or any shorter period of stay) is reduced to 4 hours. The training could be virtual as well.

14. Does the minimum of 3 ECTS credits which must be awarded in short-term blended mobilities for studies also apply in case of doctoral short-term mobilities that have no virtual component?

A blended mobility for studies must award a minimum of 3 ECTS credits, this also applies to blended short-term mobilities of doctoral students. If a doctoral student is participating in a BIP they must participate in both the physical and virtual components as any other learner. The BIP as a whole has to award 3 ECTS credits to the students. The same rule goes for BIPs that are specifically designed for doctoral students.

However, the blended component in short-term student mobility at doctoral level is optional. If the doctoral student mobility only has a physical component, the rule of the minimum 3 ECTS credits does not apply.

Where the recognition of the awarded ECTS credits is not possible, for instance in the case of some doctoral programmes, the 3 ECTS credit feature should be considered as a guideline for workload of the blended short-term student mobility at doctoral level.

15. Can a blended mobility last more than 12 months?

The physical mobility component can last a maximum of 12 months. HEIs are free to allow mobilities with a total duration of more than 12 months, as long as the physical mobility duration does not exceed 12 months. The virtual component end dates, however, must be within the project implementation period.

Please note that the balance payment of the student grant is issued at the end of the blended mobility.