

Blended Intensive Programme

Manual for the Organisers and Partners

These are short, intensive programmes that use innovative ways of learning and teaching, including the use of online cooperation. The **university** can participate either as the **organiser (coordinator)** of the program, or as a **partner**.

The programme should have **added value** (specialised content not taught somewhere else) compared to existing courses or trainings offered by the participating higher education institutions and can be multiannual. By enabling new and more flexible mobility formats that **combine physical mobility with a virtual part**, blended intensive programmes aim at **reaching all types of students from all backgrounds, study fields and cycles**.

During these blended intensive programmes, groups of **students or staff will undertake a short-term physical mobility abroad combined with a compulsory virtual component** facilitating collaborative online learning exchange and teamwork. The virtual component must bring the learners together online to work collectively and simultaneously on specific assignments that are integrated in the blended intensive programme and count towards the overall learning outcomes.

Who can participate?

A blended intensive programme has to be developed and implemented **by at least 3 higher education institutions (HEIs) awarded with an ECHE** coming from at least 3 Programme Countries.

BIPs can be a good opportunity to reach out to new groups of students, for example those in study fields where mobility opportunities have been limited or those who lack confidence to go abroad alone, potentially paving the way for their participation in long-term individual mobility later in their studies.

Duration of the activity

Physical mobility from **5 days to 30 days** of programme duration. No eligibility criteria is set for the duration of the virtual component but the combined virtual and physical mobility must award a minimum of 3 ECTS credits for students.

Venue(s) of the activity

The physical activity can take place at the receiving HEI or at any other venue in the country of the receiving HEI.

Eligible participants

- **Students** registered in a HEI and enrolled in studies leading to a recognised degree or another recognised tertiary level qualification (up to and including the level of doctorate).
- **Staff** working at a HEI in a Programme Country.
- **Teaching staff** working at a HEI in a Programme Country.
- **Staff from enterprises invited** to teach at an HEI in a Programme Country **from any enterprise working** in a Programme Country.

Other criteria

- The **virtual component must bring the learners together online to work collectively** and simultaneously on specific assignments that are integrated in the blended intensive programme and count towards the overall learning outcomes.
- Blended intensive programmes **have to award at least 3 ECTS** credits for students.
- The **minimum number of participants in a blended intensive programme is 15** from the sending institutions to the receiving institution (not including teaching/training staff involved in the delivery of the programme) in order for the programme to be eligible for funding.
- The **individual support** and, when applicable, travel support to participants for the physical activity is **provided by the sending organisation**.
- The number of teaching and training hours must ensure that the **majority of time spent abroad is related to education and training**, and not to research or any other activity.
- Participating institutions should **plan to send a sufficient number of participants** in order to ensure reaching the minimum requirement, even with cancellations/drop outs.

Roles within BIPs

Coordinating higher education institution: This HEI, awarded with an ECHE, 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. Other options include the situation where the coordinating HEI may be the sending HEI (in the case where the receiving HEI is another HEI from the partnership) or just be the coordinator without a role in mobility (where other partner HEIs assume both the hosting and the sending roles). There can be only one HEI coordinating the whole of the BIP.

Receiving higher education institution: This 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. The receiving HEI has to be part of the blended intensive programme partnership. The coordinating HEI is by default the receiving HEI (host) for the student and staff mobility, unless otherwise decided by the partnership.

Sending higher education institution /organisation: Any HEI awarded with the ECHE. 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.

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

Blended intensive programme participants

Participants in a blended intensive programme fall under two categories:

1. Participants **attending** the blended intensive programme to learn or be trained can be any:

- o Higher education students (EQF levels 5 to 8); or
- o Higher education staff (teaching or administrative staff).

2. Participants (involved in) **delivering the programme** can be:

- o Teachers and trainers from the receiving HEI;
- o Teachers and trainers who are incoming staff from other HEIs; or
- o Trainers who are “invited staff” from non-HEI organisations such as enterprises, associations or research institutes).

- As a minimum, a BIP needs to involve 15 participants who go on an Erasmus+ funded physical mobility from sending institutions to the receiving institution to attend the programme.
- The local students from the receiving institution are not eligible for an Erasmus+ grant, as they do not take part in a physical mobility abroad and are therefore not counted towards the minimum of 15 participants.
- Additional participants could also come from HEIs in Partner Countries but as they will not be funded through Erasmus+ they do not count towards the minimum of 15 participants.
- The group of participants can be composed of students and staff (learners) in the same BIP.

Quality assurance in blended intensive programmes

The quality of the programmes is ensured by the recurring project life cycle during award, implementation and reporting, but not during the application stage (as in other actions).

During KA131 project implementation, the NAs may monitor the implementation of programmes.

At the final reporting stage, the grant beneficiary will report on the implemented blended intensive programmes as part of the final report. The assessment of the final report will therefore take account of the successful implementation of the programme(s). If programmes are badly implemented, it will be reflected in the final score of the KA131 project and negatively influence the future grant allocations for this action to recurrent beneficiaries.

Overview of necessary steps from the idea to the closing of the project

- **Idea:** An HEI develops the idea of a blended intensive programme in terms of content, target audience and partnership. This is the coordinating HEI. The concept development requires the

cooperation between the international office and the faculties/departments, where a person will be assigned as blended intensive programme coordinator.

- **Partner search/participants:** The coordinating HEI finds partner HEIs in at least two other Programme Countries, the minimum configuration to receive Erasmus+ funding for the organisation and delivery of the programme. The coordinating HEI has to make sure that, together with the partner HEIs, they will have enough Erasmus+ or other funds to cover the mobility grants for the minimum number required of the BIP's participants who are learners (not teachers or trainers ensuring the delivery of the programme).
- **Funding of the programmes:** The coordinating HEI submits a funding request for organisational support for the planned blended intensive programmes to its Erasmus+ national agency under the annual call for the KA131 action. The national agency will solely use the criterion of management capacity to check whether or not to award the organisational support funds to the applicant ("Does the HEI correctly estimate its capability and capacity to organise this programme?").
- **Mobility grants:** On their part, the sending HEIs include in their overall KA131 grant application to their national agency the anticipated demand for mobility grants for students and staff to participate in one or more BIPs (see the two steps above). For student mobility for studies and for staff mobility for training regarding mobile participants in BIPs, **inter-institutional agreements have to be signed with the receiving HEI** before the mobilities take place.
- **Grant award:** The coordinating HEI is informed about the awarded funding for organisational support and the number of granted BIPs.
- **Contract:** A grant agreement for a KA131 project is signed between the Erasmus+ grant beneficiary and the national agency. Funding for organisational support for the granted blended intensive programmes is included in the overall project grant, each programme being identified with an identifier in the budget of the grant agreement.
- **Project data:** After the grant agreement signature, a KA131 project is created in the IT Beneficiary Module (BM). Within such a project, each granted blended intensive programme is listed as a separate activity. This allows the beneficiary to manage the BIP and related data and to report on its achievement.
- **Organisation:** The partnership develops, prepares and organises the blended intensive programme. The coordinating HEI supervises and reports on the delivery of the physical and the online activities.
- **Mobilities:** The sending HEIs enter the mobilities of the blended intensive programme participants in their respective granted projects in the BM and link them to the relevant BIP (to be selected from the active BIP list in BM). As a result, the beneficiary/coordinating HEI will see the incoming participants listed as part of the blended intensive programme data and will have direct access to their participant reports.
- **Reports:** After the blended intensive programme has taken place, the beneficiary reports in the interim and final beneficiary report on the achievement in terms of funding and in the final report on the achievements related to the content and cooperation arrangements within the partnership.

Further information

- **Funding has to be requested in a distributed manner** by the involved HEIs according to their role through the KA131 grant application:
 - The coordinating higher education institution applies for organisational support for each blended intensive programme as part of its overall grant application;
 - The sending higher education institutions in Programme Countries apply for mobility grants for their students and staff as part of their overall grant application;

- The receiving higher education institution in Programme Countries applies for mobility grants for invited teaching/training staff from enterprises/organisations as part of its overall grant application.
- **The organisational support sum** for the programmes is calculated as **400 EUR per participant**, with a minimum of 15 participants (i.e., a minimum of 6,000 EUR), up to a total of 8,000 EUR (i.e. the funding is capped with 20 participants).
- In this action, **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.
- **Types of eligible mobilities within BIPs:**
 - Students: “Student mobility for studies”
 - Staff (learners): “Staff mobility for training”
- The coordinator of a BIP at UPJŠ will need to provide the following information to the International Relations office of UPJŠ for the purposes of managing the BIP in the BM:
 - Title of the blended intensive programme.
 - Type of participants targeted (students, staff).
 - Subject/topic of the programme.
 - Objectives and description of the programme
 - Learning and teachings methods and expected learning/training outcomes
 - Virtual component description
 - Field of education targeted (students)
 - Education level targeted (students)
 - Start and end date of the physical activity
 - Number of ECTS credits awarded
 - Main teaching/training language
 - City of the venue
- KA131 funds cannot be transferred from mobility grants to organisational support for BIPs. However, vice versa, unused BIP organisational support may be transferred to mobility grants.