

# Erasmus+ higher education student and staff mobility

## Good practices in the implementation of the virtual component of blended intensive programmes (BIPs)

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The Erasmus+ programme supports blended intensive programmes (BIPs), allowing for groups of higher education institutions to jointly develop short, blended mobility curricula and activities for students and academic and administrative staff. BIPs combine a short-term physical mobility abroad with a compulsory virtual component facilitating collaborative online learning exchange and teamwork.

Most commonly, the virtual component of a BIP takes place **before the physical component**. It often features educational activities, such as lectures and webinars, complemented by online study material to introduce the course content of the BIP, as well as expected learning outcomes. It also generally includes team building activities (including icebreakers) to allow the participants to get to know each other before they meet in person.

### Example

After being presented with **theoretical background and case studies** relevant to the course programme, students may be asked to submit a first critical reflection through an online platform

The virtual component can also take place **after the physical component**, in addition or substitution of the one before the physical component. In such cases, it usually consists of presentations about the students' findings and discussions with their peers, often complemented by a final assessment of the learners' work. A virtual meeting following the physical component can help strengthen the relationship between participants and the institutions involved, thus contributing to future cooperation activities and planning of new study programmes.

### Example

The physical component can be followed by **virtual workshops**, in which students from different countries and backgrounds will work together to apply the notions learnt to specific situations and case studies from their national context

# 1 General recommendations

Following the successful implementation of BIPs since their introduction in 2021 some good practice examples have been identified:



The virtual component of the BIP should have a clear structure, well-defined inputs, deadlines, schedules, well-described syllabi and expected learning outcomes, well-defined assessment criteria and grading of individual and/or group work



The time gap between the virtual and physical component should be limited



Lecturers from each partner of the BIP can offer at least one virtual session, in order to introduce different viewpoints and comparative approaches, taking into account perspectives from a variety of cultural and academic backgrounds



Reflection forms can be provided to participants after online thematic sessions, asking them to summarize the content of the sessions, as well as describe how the sessions added to their general knowledge on the topic and contributed to skills development



Mentoring sessions can be organised as a follow-up to online sessions to allow participants to ask for guidance on the content of the sessions



Some BIPs provide additional asynchronous content, pre-recorded materials, such as videos or podcasts, to allow students to process learning material at their own pace



Material overload should be avoided



Where possible and desirable, the virtual sessions can aim at fostering dialogue between academia and external stakeholders

## Example

Before the beginning of the BIP, students can be provided a **Manual for the virtual component**, a detailed programme including a description of all the lectures and information about the lecturers

# 2 Innovative teaching and learning methods

When organising BIPs, educators should also keep in mind **the potential of online contexts for collaborative learning**. The use of digital interactive tools can help ensure that the virtual component of the BIP is a source of student-centred learning, providing students with the opportunity to develop collaborative skills and fostering exchange of different cultural perspectives and good practices.

## 2.a Utilisation of digital interactive tools

Several interactive tools can be used to foster participants' engagement, such as:



**Slido**, which provides a Q&A and polling platform



**Mentimeter**, which allows to create quizzes to challenge the audience



**Mirò**, which features a virtual blackboard where each participant can add comments in an asynchronous way



**Padlet**, which offers a visual collaboration platform for creative work



**Wooclap**, which offers an interactive presentation tool



**Mural**, which provides a digital whiteboard for team collaboration

## 2.b Promote student-centred learning



The creation of a **buddy system**, not only for the physical component but for the virtual component as well, can shift the expectations for a successful programme somewhat from the educators to the students.



Participants can be awarded a **bonus score** for helping their fellow students in their preparation for the programme and the physical component.

## 2.c Foster interaction and active virtual participation

Collaborative online tools can be employed to explore **interactive learning activities**, such as role-playing games, simulations or debates.



The virtual component could be structured as a multi-party, multi-issue negotiation role-playing game between different stakeholders with conflicting interests, the purpose of which is to negotiate a favourable outcome.



Simulation game models allow participants to enter dynamic digital environments.



Recreating a virtual escape room can be an original team building activity, allowing participants to get to know each other while interacting in a digital environment.

### Example

**EU simulation game:** the students receive an introduction to EU institutions, the functioning of the European Parliament (EP), and the content and controversies surrounding the European Green Deal (EGD). They are then divided into groups and represent the positions of one parliamentary group in the EP, drafting position papers in which they present “their” political positions on the EGD

## 3 Assignments and evaluation

Online assignments can be foreseen to **monitor progress** and **assess learning outcomes**.

Assignments can be based on the content of the virtual component (to be completed before the physical component) or can be based on the content of the physical component (to be completed before a follow-up virtual session and possibly included in a presentation).

It has been identified as good practice to **regularly evaluate** the participants’ online work, both by the lecturers and by the participants.

### Example

Participants can be asked to complete an **online questionnaire for self-assessment** in order to get to know themselves better and to adapt more easily to the new multicultural academic environment. The respondents can receive a **personalised assessment of their level of proficiency** for the analysed dimensions and a subsequent s

### Example

Having the **students evaluate their peers** can encourage cross-pollination of ideas and fosters diverse perspectives on complex topics, fostering a sense of community and promoting a student-centred learning approach