

An Introduction to Blended Mobility and Blended Intensive Programmes

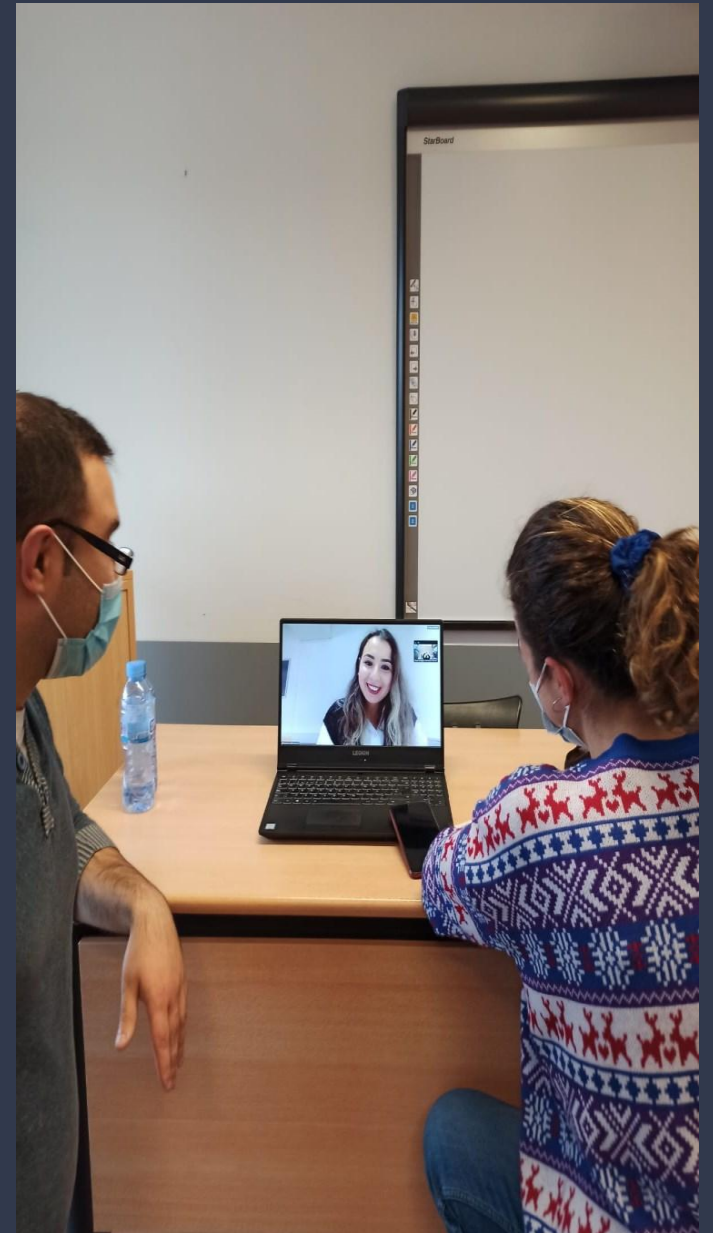
ROBERT O'DOWD (UNIVERSITY OF LEÓN, SPAIN)
SINA WERNER (RUHR-UNIVERSITY BOCHUM, GERMANY)



OUR PLAN FOR TODAY

By the end of this session you will:

- understand the concept of Blended Mobility and be able to differentiate between Virtual Exchange, Virtual Mobility and Blended Mobility
- Have seen a concrete example of a Blended Mobility project in action
- Understand how Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programmes work
- Have an overview of how Blended Intensive Programmes are being put into practice all over Europe



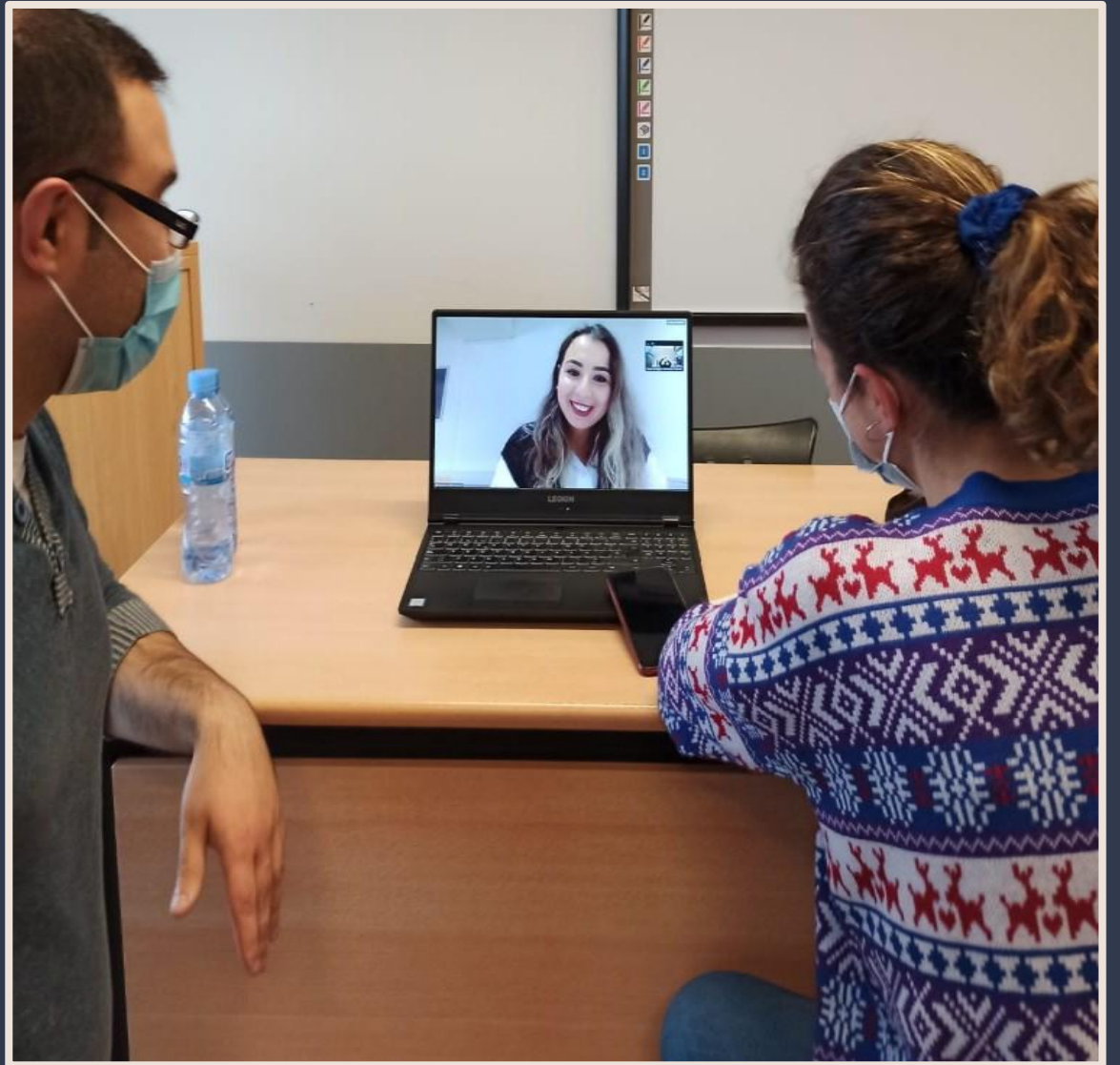
A QUICK REVIEW OF DEFINITIONS

1. What is the difference between Virtual Exchange and Virtual Mobility?
2. What do we mean by the term Blended Mobility?
3. What is a BIP?



WHAT IS VIRTUAL EXCHANGE?

- An umbrella term to describe the different ways that...
- learners are engaged in sustained online intercultural interaction and collaboration...
- ...with partners from other cultural contexts or geographical locations....
- ...as an integrated part of course work....
- ...and under the guidance of educators (O'Dowd, 2023).



WHAT MAKES 'VIRTUAL EXCHANGE' DIFFERENT TO 'VIRTUAL MOBILITY'?

Virtual Mobility - Students attend classes for a short period at another institution outside their own country, without physically leaving their home.

Students register to complete a number of credits with the foreign university.

Students follow classes at the foreign university via online platforms.

Students focus primarily on course content provided by lecturers in the foreign university.

Students may or may not receive credit / grades from the foreign university for their work / exams. In some cases these grades are sent to the home university.



Virtual Exchange - Students engage in collaborative online work with students from other universities as part of their studies at their local institution.

Students continue in their home university and follow their usual courses.

As part of their work for their course at their home institution, students interact online with other students at a foreign university.

Students focus primarily on interaction and collaboration with students in the foreign university.

Students receive a part of their grade in their course at the home institution for their participation and work in their online project.

WHAT IS BLENDED MOBILITY?



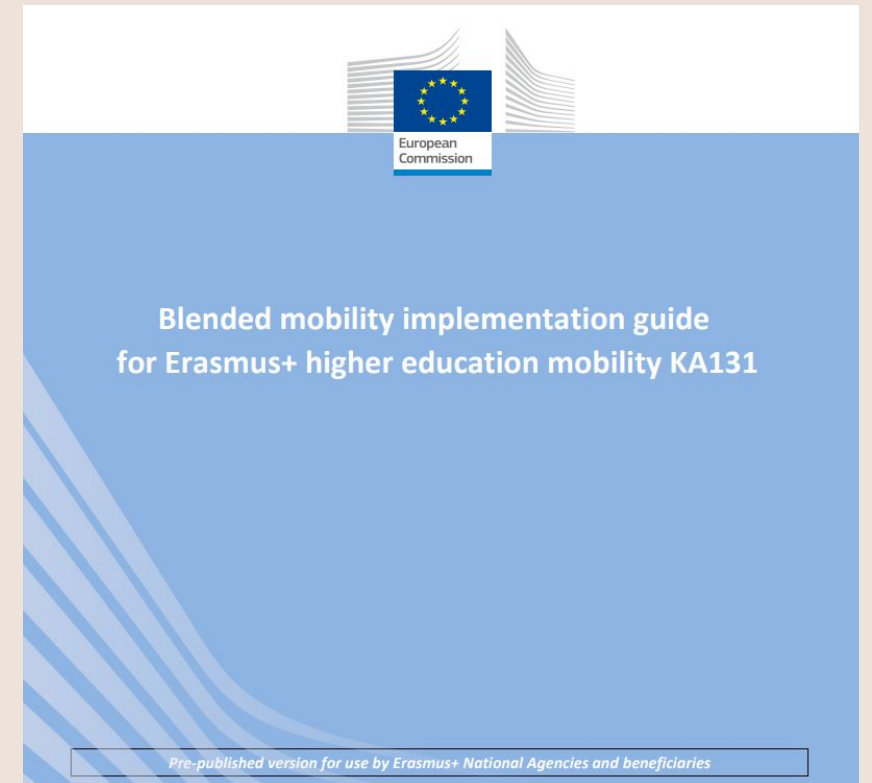
Blended Mobility can be defined as the strategic combination of both physical mobility and structured online collaboration (i.e. Virtual Exchange).

WHAT ARE BLENDED INTENSIVE PROGRAMMES (BIPs)?

In addition, any student may participate in Blended Intensive Programmes. In these cases, physical mobility must last between 5 days and 30 days and be combined with a compulsory virtual component facilitating collaborative online learnings exchange and teamwork. A Blended Mobility for studies must award a minimum of 3 ECTS credits.

BENEFITS OF INTRODUCING BLENDED MOBILITY?

- Research has already shown that all mobility experiences, regardless of length, have a positive impact on students.
- Better accommodate the different needs and situations of a diverse student population.
- If young students can be encouraged to participate in short blended programmes, they will be more likely to participate in full semester programmes later in their studies.
- “Internationalisation at home”: A good introduction for local students that are hesitant to go on mobility and might encourage further participation in mobility activities later in their studies.



Blended Intensive Programmes



+

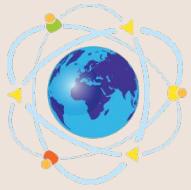


- short joint physical group mobility (5-30 days) combined with virtual phase (before, parallel or after mobility ?) of undefined duration
- for students and higher education staff
- funding for coordinating university and mobility
- minimum: 3 HEIs from 3 different programme countries
- minimum 15, maximum 20 mobile participants
- for students at least 3 ECTS for the whole activity

BIP Case Study

Innovation in Foreign Language Education





VALIANT

Virtual Innovation and Support Networks

An Erasmus+ KA3 European Policy Experiment with...

Ministries of education

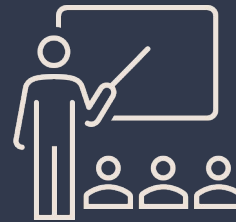
from Galicia and Castilla y León in Spain; Portugal; Slovenia; Baden-Württemberg in Germany and Norway.

and Universities

from Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Norway, Slovenia, Cyprus, Germany and the UK.

Virtual Innovation and Support Networks

are defined as Virtual Exchange programmes which bring together



in-service
school
teachers



student
teachers



and experts

in facilitated online collaboration around real-world educational issues.

Participating Universities

University of León,
Spain
Coordination
receiving
18 students

University of Bochum,
Germany
Coordination
sending
9 students

University of Oulu,
Finland
10 students

Trinity College Dublin,
Ireland
5 students

Vytautas Magnus
University, Lithuania
4 students

University of Sassari,
Italy
3 students

In-service teachers
8

teaching staff
5

TIMELINE & COLLABORATION FORMAT



Guest lectures & group discussions

Online lecture & discussion with working group
4 weeks



Virtual collaboration

Agreeing on a topic & project planning
2 weeks



On campus collaboration

Conclusion of project group work & presentation
5 days

Week in León

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Welcome session & Guest lecture	Cultural visit	PhD presentations	Cultural visit	Project presentations
Project work	Project work	Project work	Project work	
Dinner & quiz	-	-	International night	

Perception of collaboration



ONLINE COLLABORATION

communication



- more focused
- formal & less emotional
- expressing ideas and understanding them: more complicated

collaboration



- easier to delegate work
- access
- helped with main idea for project
- avoidance of discussions

relationships



- no difference
- superficial
- cultural differences

ON-CAMPUS COLLABORATION

communication



- body language
- more negotiation
- Decision-making = easier
- more “natural”

collaboration

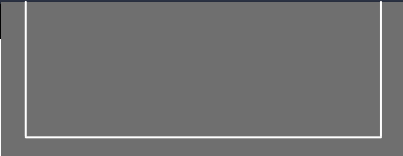


- strong project ideas
- more participation
- communication with other groups possible

relationships



- breaking the ice = easier
- established more quickly
- stronger



“I FEEL THAT THE COMBINATION OF BOTH MODES IS KEY. I DON'T THINK THAT OUR COLLABORATION WOULD HAVE BEEN SO EASY AND COMFORTABLE IF WE HAVEN'T MET EACH OTHER ONLINE BEFORE.”

BENEFITS OF COMBINING THE TWO MODES

I think that communicating via online tools is a good way to "start", but meeting physically sure is on another level. It has value to combine these two modes of collaboration for sure: starting via zoom probably made it easier to get in touch with the others physically, because they were no complete strangers.

it benefits from the best parts of both modalities, flexibility and accessibility online, in-depth communication and further bonding on campus.

BIP Study with Coordinators



Objective of the study

Getting to know the...

- potential and
- challenges of BIPs

In order to...

- derive good practice for BIPs

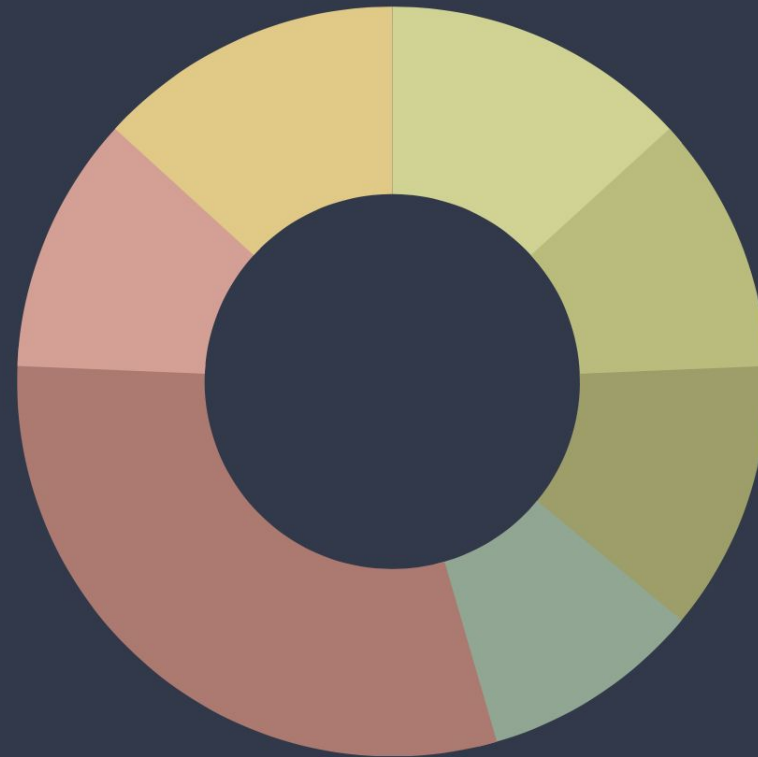
Participants

- almost 200 coordinators
- questionnaire with closed and open items

Subjects

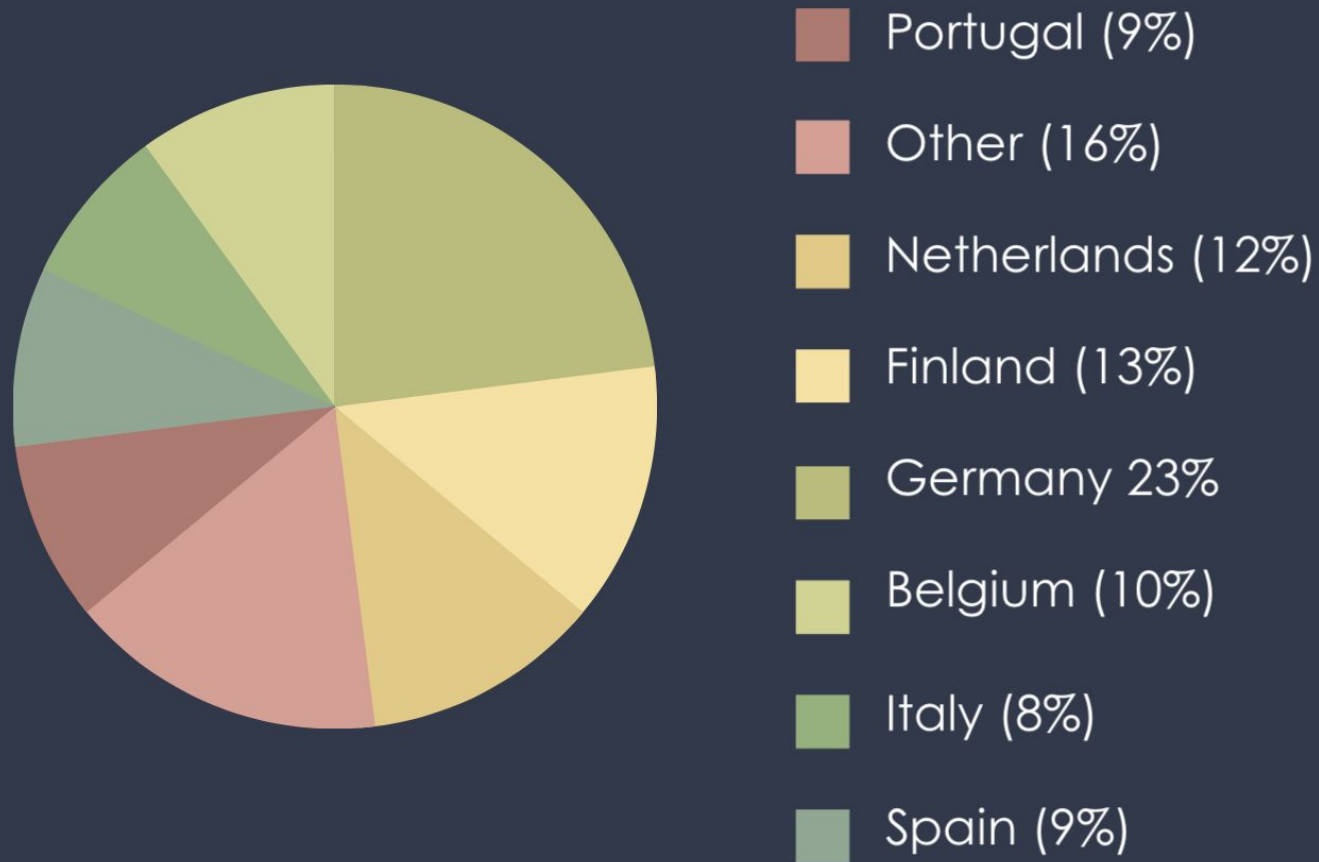
SUBJECTS

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%)

HOW WAS THE PHYSICAL MOBILITY ORGANISED?



Most popular destinations for the physical mobility

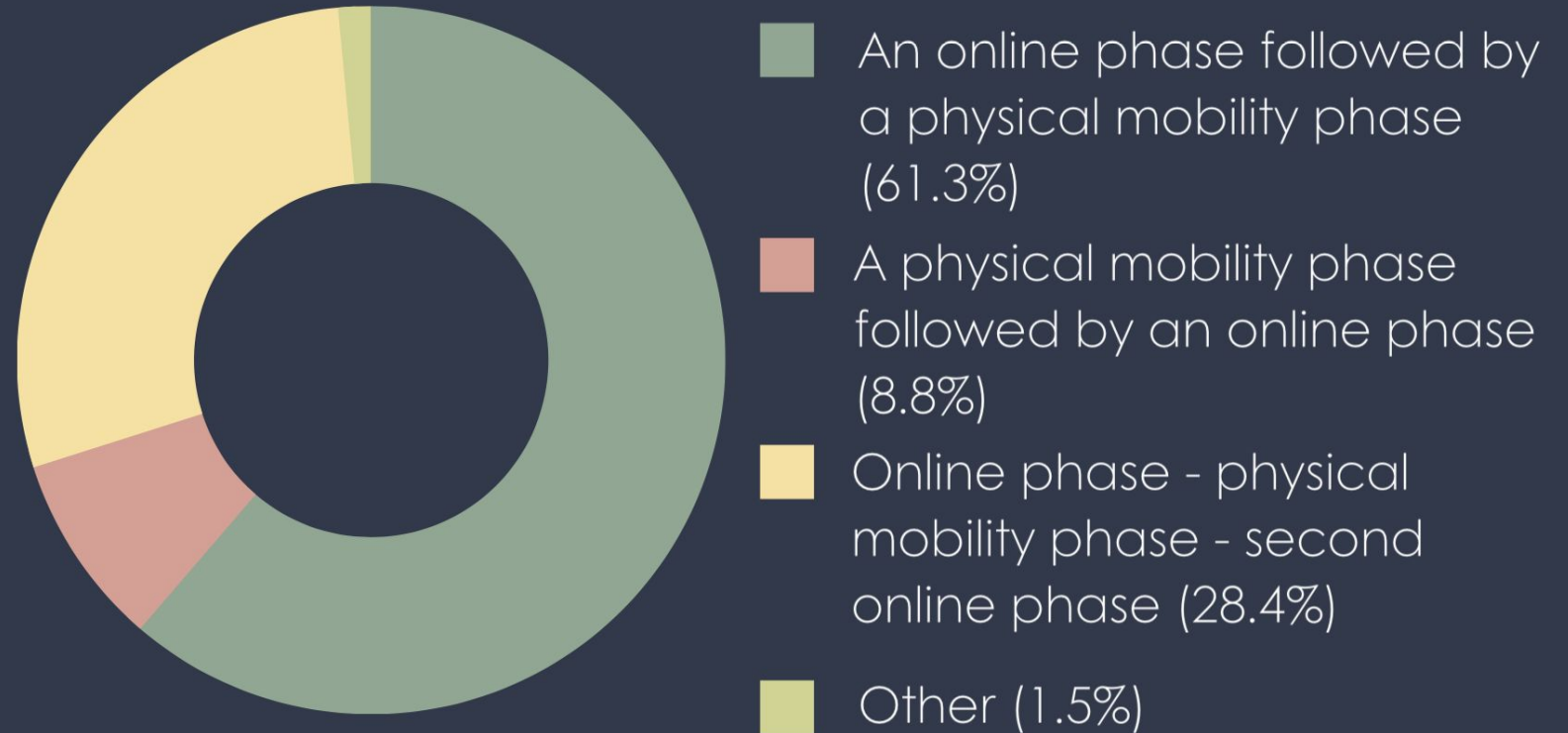


The majority of BIPs had a mobility phase between 5-7 days.

How was it organised?

HOW WAS IT ORGANISED?

The majority of BIPs begin with an online phase followed by a physical mobility phase.



How were students rewarded?

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%**

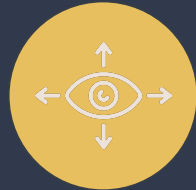
What were the benefits?



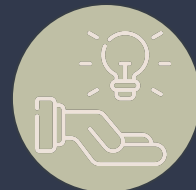
Having the opportunity to work in international teams (33%)



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?



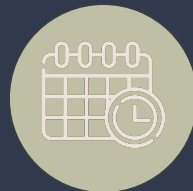
Administrative issues (e.g. excessive bureaucracy, different regulations in different countries) (36%)



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%)

Activities suitable for online collaboration

- 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

Activities suitable for on-campus collaboration

1

Excursions
Social and cultural events

2

Workshops
Group work

3

Lectures
Seminars

Good practice

- 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

- Make use of advantages of different collaboration formats in BIPs
- Training needed for university staff to plan and implement BIPs
- Prepare lecturers as well as personnel from International Offices for collaboration
- Research needed how BIPs affect learning outcomes (e.g. intercultural learning)

Implications