



Co-funded by
the European Union



Position paper: CIVIS asks for a revision of the eligibility criteria of Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs)

August, 2023





Project number: 101089983

CIVIS, Europe's Civic University Alliance, is a European University Alliance gathering 11 member universities: Aix-Marseille Université (France), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece), University of Bucharest (Romania), Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgium), Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain), Sapienza Università di Roma (Italia), Stockholm University (Sweden), Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen (Germany), University of Glasgow (UK), Paris Lodron University of Salzburg (Austria) and University of Lausanne (Switzerland).

Selected by the European Commission as one of the first 17 European Universities pilots, it brings together around half a million students and more than 70 000 staff members, including 37 400 academics and researchers.

In 2022, CIVIS signed a partnership agreement with 6 strategic African partner universities: Université Hassan II de Casablanca (Morocco), University of Sfax (Tunisia), Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (Senegal), Makerere University (Uganda), University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa), Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique).

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Position

Considering the elements below, **we are asking for a revision of the eligibility criteria of the Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) action to allow up to one third of the international incoming participants (5 out of the 15) to come from Bologna process countries and/or financed by Erasmus+ external policy funds (i.e KA 171).** This will ensure an easier management for Erasmus+ universities organising BIPs (often obliged to cancel programmes for last-minute drop-out of one or two Erasmus+ students), a reinforced BIPs capacity to attract the best talents to their programmes (applying the inclusion principle) and a stronger coherence of the Erasmus+ programme towards its overall aim of reinforcing the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process countries can recognize 3 ECTS for participating students).

Context

Blended intensive programmes are short, intensive programmes that use innovative ways of learning, teaching and training for students and staff including the use of online cooperation. They are developed and implemented by at least three higher education institutions (HEIs) coming from at least three EU Member States and [third countries](#) associated to the Programme (called a blended intensive programme partnership).

During blended intensive programmes, groups of students or staff undertake a short-term physical mobility abroad combined with a **compulsory virtual component** facilitating collaborative online learning exchange and teamwork. The duration of the physical component is between 5 and 30 days, but there is no limitation on the duration of the virtual component.

The eligibility criteria list of BIP action includes the following under the section on “eligible participants”:

Students:

Students registered in a HEI in an EU Member State or a third country associated to the Programme or a third country not associated to the Programme, and enrolled in studies leading to a recognised degree or another recognised tertiary level qualification (up to and including the level of doctorate).¹

To be eligible for organisational support, a blended intensive programme needs to involve a minimum of 15 Erasmus+ mobile learners supported by internal policy funds (not including teaching/training staff involved in the delivery of the programme).

This new Erasmus action is the result from the mobility experimentation carried out by European Universities alliances during the first phase (2019-2022). Today, many alliances are using this new mobility mechanism to support short-term mobilities and develop joint transdisciplinary education offer in line with the objectives of Erasmus+ programme. Since the EUI 2022 call, alliances have been encouraged to enlarge their consortia to countries of the Bologna process. As a result, there are now alliances that include universities based in countries non-associated to Erasmus+ programme (i.e

¹ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/mobility-projects-for-higher-education-students-and-staff>

Switzerland and United Kingdom) that are participating to all EUI activities and actively contributing to the reinforcement of the European Higher Education Area. Alliances are exploiting BIPs tools to increase student mobility in Europe but, the **current eligibility criteria considering only Erasmus+ incoming students to meet the 15-participant threshold is creating an imbalance** for the universities organising BIPs that are accepting non-Erasmus+ students in their programmes.

In Europe, academics and students have shown a strong interest and participation in BIPs. The financial uncertainty created by the minimum number of Erasmus+ students has been repeatedly raised in the different working groups and entities at EU level (EUF, EUA, ...). This uncertainty undermines long-term collaboration and 'internalisation' of the BIPs processes, which constitute the end goals of the BIPs.

The ability to count all participants – irrespective of Erasmus+ association – is also a strong argument towards the value of BIPs in changing how we collaborate and how we view mobility within the curriculum. It further demonstrates the value of the BIP structure and the diversity that the programme brings to each HEI but also to the EU participants. These aspects should be captured as they enhance the BIPs, and the number of overall participants should be considered as an enhancer, not a limiting factor.

It is understood that the European Commission provides organization support fund, but **non-Erasmus+ participants also contribute to the delivery and success of the BIPs**, bringing different cultural viewpoints, skills and expertise (and their own funding) which is at the core of pan-European education.