

REPORT

2024

Guidelines for Implementing Blended Intensive Programs (BIP) in Conservatoires

“A vibrant BIP is more than academic; it’s a cultural and personal exchange.”

Mission

This guideline synthesizes the challenges, solutions, and best practices identified during the workshop on Blended Intensive Programs (BIP) in conservatoires, held in Dublin in September 2024. It aims to provide practical strategies for international offices and institutions to effectively implement and manage BIPs.

Introduction

BIPs are an innovative component of the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 framework, combining short-term physical mobility with a mandatory virtual component.

Key Features:

- International collaboration (at least 3 higher education institutions from 3 different EU Member States or Erasmus+ associated countries_
- Short-term physical mobility: physical participation lasts between 5 and 30 days
- Virtual component: address the online collaboration, enabling participants to work on integrated tasks and achieve shared learning outcomes.

The Blended Intensive Program exemplifies the transformative power of international collaboration in conservatoires, promoting innovation and providing a flexible approach to international mobility.

Planning a BIP requires a long-term perspective. Hosting institutions should begin preparations well in advance (recommended at least six months prior), addressing key aspects such as defining topics and activities, budgeting, securing venues, selecting participants, and coordinating logistics.

Institutions should ensure transparency, clearly define responsibilities, and integrate BIP activities into regular workflows to ensure seamless execution.

Implementing a Blended Intensive Program (BIP) successfully requires a holistic approach that addresses multiple facets of planning, execution, and sustainability. Each element (communications, organization, curriculum integration, academic recognition, participant engagement, financial and logistical management, partnership building, and networking) plays a critical role in shaping the program's impact and effectiveness.

This guide outlines key strategies tailored to these areas, offering practical solutions for common challenges and emphasizing long-term sustainability. By adopting these strategies, institutions can foster innovation, enhance international collaboration, and create enriching experiences for both students and staff.

1 Communication and Organizational Structure

The success of a Blended Intensive Program (BIP) relies on a strong foundation of effective communication and well-structured organization. Establishing transparent communication channels is critical for fostering trust and understanding among partner institutions. Open communication not only minimizes misunderstandings but also creates a collaborative atmosphere where everyone feels informed and engaged.

The complexity of BIP implementation necessitates a clear division of responsibilities among partner institutions. Defining roles and creating a detailed task list with deadlines ensures accountability and efficient collaboration. This shared responsibility reduces the administrative effort on any one institution and promotes a balanced partnership where each partner contributes to the program's success.

The success of BIP relies on a strong foundation of effective communication and well-structured organization

Clear Communication

- Establish transparent communication channels between partners.
- Provide comprehensive information to all participants (teachers, students, administrators).

Workplan integration

- Embed BIP activities into teachers' official schedules.
- Ensure remuneration is clearly defined and sourced (e.g., institutional budgets, OS funds).

Shared responsibilities

- Define roles and responsibilities for each partner institution in advance.
- Develop a detailed task list with deadlines.

Long-term planning

- Plan BIP at least 6 months in advance to accommodate venue reservations, teacher availability, and student selection.

② Curriculum and academic recognition

Clear and consistent policies for credit recognition across institutions are essential to uphold the academic integrity of a Blended Intensive Program (BIP). A successful BIP depends on its smooth integration into academic frameworks, ensuring that students and educators benefit from a well-structured and recognized experience. Participants should receive formal documentation, such as certificates,

to acknowledge their contributions and achievements, further enhancing the program's value.

Faculties and departments play a crucial role in shaping the content of a BIP. Encouraging them to propose interdisciplinary or culturally significant topics not only aligns the program with academic goals but also adds depth and innovation. This collaborative approach ensures that the BIP remains relevant, engaging, and impactful for all participants.

Clear and consistent policies for credit recognition across institutions are essential

Recognition and documentation

- Ensure clear policies for credit recognition across institutions.
- Provide certificates for both students and staff.

Curriculum integration

- Align BIP activities with the existing curriculum to ensure smooth ECTS accreditation.
- Offer additional ECTS either within the diploma supplement or main curriculum.

Subject proposals

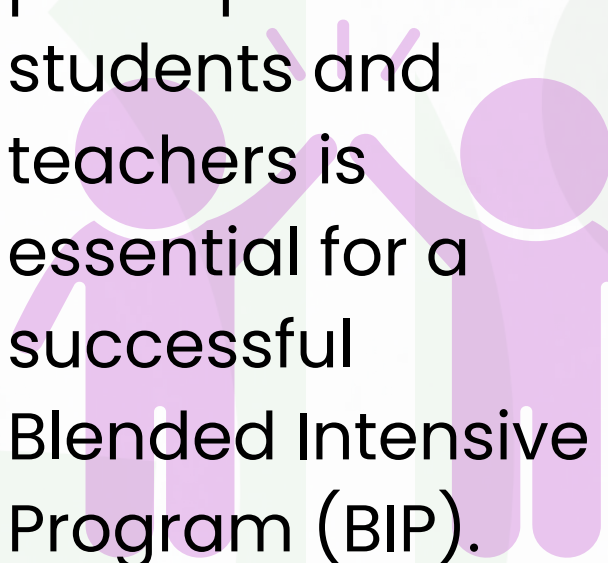
- Encourage faculties and departments to propose interdisciplinary or culturally relevant subjects for the BIP.
- Tailor topics to the strengths of each participating institution.

③ Enhancing student and teacher engagement

Active participation from students and teachers is essential for a successful Blended Intensive Program (BIP). By providing enriching activities and leveraging digital tools, institutions can create a vibrant and participatory environment for all participants.

Activities that connect participants to the local culture and foster collaboration make the program more engaging and memorable.

Active participation from students and teachers is essential for a successful Blended Intensive Program (BIP).



Motivating participants:

- Offer rewards for teachers, such as recognition of hours in their annual workload.
- Enhance student participation by addressing logistical challenges (e.g., travel grants for instrument transportation).

Virtual and digital components

- Design meaningful online components using platforms like Moodle, Trello, or Padlet.
- Ensure technical support and select platforms that are user-friendly and widely accessible.

Interactive and cultural activities

Incorporate unique, localized experiences such as:

- Field trips to culturally significant venues
- Guided city tours, welcome meetings, and jam sessions.
- Closing concerts with recording for dissemination.
- Culinary experiences; organize food tastings or cooking classes to explore local cuisine.
- Collaborative art projects; create opportunities for participants to co-produce artworks or musical pieces reflecting the program's theme.

4 Financial and Logistical Management

Institutions should prioritize the efficient use of OS funds, directing them toward key needs.

To further strengthen the financial foundation of the program, exploring external funding sources, such as sponsors, can provide valuable support and enhance the overall experience.

Budgeting should be finalized well in advance to avoid last-minute surprises. Careful planning and smart resource allocation can make the difference between a seamless experience and unnecessary complications.

Institutions should prioritize the efficient use of OS funds, directing them toward key needs.

Hosting Arrangements

- Choose host institutions with affordable accommodation options (e.g. dormitories).
- Centralize catering and local transport arrangements to minimize costs.

Budget Optimization

- Utilize OS funds effectively for logistics and accommodation.
- Explore external funding sources (e.g., sponsors) to supplement the budget.

Timely Budgeting

- Finalize budget allocations and participation grants well in advance.
- Ensure flexibility to reallocate unused funds as needed.

5 Building Partnerships and Networking

Choosing partners with aligned themes and a demonstrated commitment to the program's goals is essential. Tools like Erasmus+ staff teaching weeks and IRC matchmaking platforms can help identify suitable collaborators, ensuring a shared vision and mutual dedication.

Strong personal and professional relationships within the consortium are vital for smooth collaboration.

Selecting Partners

- Choose partners based on thematic alignment and institutional commitment.
- Use platforms like Erasmus+ staff teaching weeks, AEC meetings and IRC tools to identify potential collaborators.

Consortium Cohesion

- Foster personal and professional relationships within the consortium.
- Encourage participation in existing projects to reduce workload duplication.

Commitment and Trust

- Establish clear agreements, including timelines and deliverables, to build trust between partners.

6 Evaluation and Dissemination

Collecting insights from participants through surveys and interviews is essential to understand their experiences. This feedback provides valuable information for refining future programs.

Sharing these success stories on institutional and social media platforms showcases the program's value and inspires wider engagement.

Feedback Mechanisms

- Conduct surveys and interviews with participants to gather insights.
- Use feedback for continuous improvement and to demonstrate impact.

Promotion and Dissemination

- Record closing concerts or activities for promotional purposes.
- Share success stories through institutional and social media channels.

7 Addressing Challenges

While BIPs offer immense opportunities, they also present unique challenges. Accommodation and logistics are often significant expenses. Institutions can negotiate with local hosts for discounts or reserved spaces; consider scheduling BIP activities outside peak seasons (crowded periods) to lower costs.

Student grants

- Advocate for increased student mobility grants, especially for those traveling with instruments.

Accommodation and logistics

- Negotiate with local hosts for discounts or reserved spaces.
- Consider scheduling BIP activities during off-peak periods to reduce costs.

Digital integration

- Invest in training for staff to enhance digital competencies.
- Streamline online components to complement, not duplicate, in-person activities.

Administrative load

- Use centralized tools for documentation, registration, and reporting.
- Assign a dedicated project manager for smooth operation.

8 Long-term Sustainability

Institutions should secure a commitment from their leadership to embed BIPs as a strategic priority. Allocating financial and human resources ensures the program's sustained implementation and signals its importance within the organization.

Institutional commitment

- Secure commitment from leadership to embed BIPs as a strategic priority.
- Ensure financial and human resources are allocated for sustained implementation.

Innovative synergies

- Create interdisciplinary projects combining music with other fields such as dance, drama, etc.
- Build partnerships with city administrations to enhance cultural immersion.

Guidelines and flexibility

- Advocate for flexible regulations and funding mechanisms at the European Commission level.
- Develop standardized guidelines for BIP implementation across institutions.



THANK YOU!

WHO

The Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) is a European cultural and educational network with around 309 member institutions for professional music training in 64 countries. The network is co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme.

DISCLAIMER

© AEC - European Association of Conservatoires

Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged, save where otherwise stated. Where prior permission must be obtained for the reproduction or use of textual and multimedia information (sound, images, software, etc.), such permission shall cancel the above-mentioned general permission and shall clearly indicate any restrictions on use.

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 EACEA can be held responsible for them.

CONTACT

Avenue des Celtes/Keltenlaan 20
1040 Etterbeek, Brussels, Belgium

events@aec-music.eu



www.aec-music.eu



Co-funded by
the European Union