

# Time2Go4.0

Collaborative Projects for Top Industrial Managers in Sustainable Industry 4.0

How to get fundings for short mobility periods in collaborative projects?



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Top International Managers in Engineer

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### How to get fundings for short mobility periods in collaborative projects?

#### 1. Introduction

Blended learning is a mix of in-person and remote learning activities. This is the focus of collaborative design projects where students, instructors and stakeholders have to meet physically, at least to discuss the specifications, to agree on a project methodology and to share ideas on common prototypes.

Hybrid learning is an educational approach where some individuals participate in person and some participate online. Hybrid learning aspects will not be developed here.

Blended intensive programmes are short, intensive programmes that use innovative ways of learning and teaching, including the use of online cooperation. Blended intensive programmes aim at reaching all types of students from all backgrounds, study fields and cycles by enabling new and more flexible mobility formats that combine physical mobility with a virtual part.

Groups of higher education institutions will have the opportunity to jointly develop and organise short blended intensive programmes of learning, teaching and training for students and staff. 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.

In addition, blended intensive programmes can be open to student and staff from higher education institutions outside the partnership. Blended intensive programmes build capacity for developing and implementing innovative teaching and learning practices in the participating HEIs.

Erasmus+ funding for blended intensive programmes consists of organisational support (for coordinating higher education institute) and mobility support (for students and / or staff). The individual support and, when applicable, travel support to participants for the physical mobility activity is provided by the sending organisation.

The blended intensive programmes have to meet all Erasmus+ procedures. This means interinstitutional agreements, and process flows concerning learning agreements, transcript of records, grade conversion and recognition of credits have to be in place.

## 2. Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs)

### Which teaching activities for a BIP?

Blended intensive programmes (BIPs) have been introduced in the Erasmus+ programmes to allow short-term mobilities for group of students and academic staff, including distance-based learning activities.

“The programmes may include challenge-based learning where transnational and transdisciplinary teams work together to tackle challenges for example those linked to the United Nations’ sustainable development goals or other societal challenges identified by regions, cities or companies. The intensive programme should have added value 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.

Groups of higher education institutions will have the opportunity to organise short blended intensive programmes of learning, teaching and training for students and staff. During these blended intensive programmes, groups of students or staff as learners 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.

In addition, blended intensive programmes can be open to student and staff from higher education institutions outside the partnership. Blended intensive programmes build capacity for developing and implementing innovative teaching and learning practices in the participating HEIs.” [eras2022]

The duration of the physical mobility is minimum 5 days and maximum 30 days (travel days not included). A one-week kick-off seminar may be organized in a BIP but it is not clear whether two distinct weeks (one at the beginning of the project, the other at the

end) could be financially supported. There is a tendency to limit expenses and carbon emissions related to travelling.

Blended intensive programmes have to award at least 3 ECTS credits for students.

The minimum number of Erasmus+ funded mobile participants in a blended intensive programme is 15 (not including teaching/training staff involved in the delivery of the programme) in order for the programme to be eligible for funding.

### **Which partnership for a BIP?**

At least three Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must participate.

There is one coordinating HEI (in principle the receiving school) that must have the “Erasmus Charter for Higher Education” and associated partner HEIs. It should be noted that HEIs outside the partnership can participate: this allows some flexibility to involve students whose schools are not in the Erasmus+ programme but no financial support will be provided for them.

Students from the receiving HEI are not counted in the minimum number of students. If 20 mobile students are involved, 4 to 5 more from the local institution are expected to join the BIP as well.

### **Which financial support for a BIP?**

The financial support consists of two parts:

A - the organisational support grant: a contribution to any cost incurred by the institutions involved in relation to the organisation of the blended intensive programmes, such as costs related to the preparation, design, development, implementation and follow-up of the programmes, including the delivery of physical and virtual/remote activities as well as the overall management and coordination. With 400 € per participant and a limit of 20 funded participants, the amount of money remains moderate. The optimal size of such a project should be around 20 students (a safety margin with respect to the minimal number of students of 15 must be taken!).

B - the student grants: students receive a set daily amount of 70 € (possibly more according to the national Erasmus agency) for the duration of the physical activities (50 € from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> day of activity), including up to 2 extra days for travel (or 4 days for green travel, if applicable). Five days is a minimum mobility time, excluding travel time. Students and recent graduates with fewer opportunities receive a top-up amount to the individual support of their EU Erasmus+ grant of an amount of 100 € for a physical mobility activity period of 5-14 days and 150 € for the one of 15-30 days. The criteria to

be applied are defined at national level by the National Agencies in agreement with National Authorities.

Travel expenses are not covered, with an exception of students with fewer opportunities with the limits indicated below.

| Travel distance | Standard travel | Green travel |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 10 – 99 km      | 23 €            |              |
| 100 – 499 km    | 180 €           | 210 €        |
| 500 – 1999 km   | 275 €           | 320 €        |
| 2000 – 2999 km  | 360 €           | 410 €        |
| 3000 – 3999 km  | 530 €           | 610 €        |
| 4000 – 7999 km  | 820 €           |              |
| 8000 km or more | 1500 €          |              |

The travel grants will not cover all the accommodation and travel costs and additional financial support will be necessary.

The coordinating HEI is responsible for sharing the organisational support grant for blended intensive programmes among the partnership where the above-mentioned costs are incurred.

### Which timeline for a BIP?

A BIP must be prepared between 12 and 6 months in advance, as suggested in Figure 1.

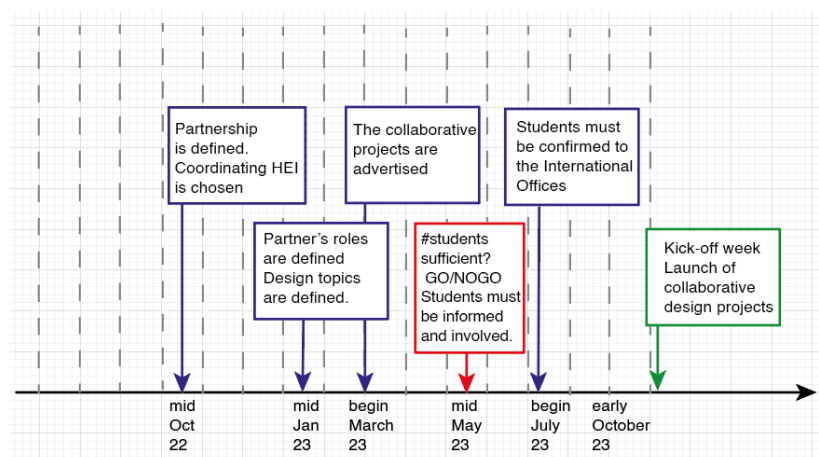


Figure 1. Example of tentative schedule

As a first preliminary step (12 to 6 months from the kick-off week), the partnership among the HEI must be defined. The coordinating HEI must be chosen. To make things easier, it will be considered as the receiving institution. The coordinating HEI receives the

organisational support grant (between 6000 € and 8000 € ) and will provide the electronic platform to allow the virtual collaborative design process. It is expected that all academic partners contribute to the course content shared to the students. The receiving institution identifies the student accommodation and defines the incentives for their local students. As the receiving institution is defined, partners can estimate travel and accommodation costs for their mobile students.

It is expected that a partnership is defined for a couple of years, with a turning coordinating/receiving institution.

As design projects are considered, industrial partners should be identified locally, as they will have to provide the design topics. For a standard size of 24 students, one or two different topics or companies can be relevant. Industrial visits, meetings to clarify the specifications will be part of the kick-off program and should be conceived.

The International offices should be contacted as they must embed the BIP in their mobility budget for the next year. Strangely enough, currently, there is no standard submission form for a BIP. All student mobilities are managed by the international offices on an individual basis. This could be changed in the next years.

As a second step (7 to 4 months from the kick-off week), the design topics from the companies should be defined. It is not necessary to disclose them to the students but to make the collaborative project sufficiently attractive, the company and activity field should be advertised. The recruitment of students can be difficult as students may be reluctant to choose a team work with unknown members, with uncertainty about their own role in the team. The teams (4 teams of 6 students, 6 teams of 4 students, as a standard format) should be defined to ensure a good balance of profiles and intercultural diversity.

As the third step (3 to 1 month from the kick-off week), the students must be identified, confirmed and declared to the international offices.

The kick-off week can take place!

In our discussion, October (during common teaching period for one week) or end August (generally no classes, possible combination with summer courses, possible interference with exams) are the best periods to organize the kick-off week for a year-long project.

### 3. Alternate financial sources

#### 3.1 Blended short-term mobility

It looks like a BIP, but is not a BIP since it can be bilateral. This must be considered as an exceptional inclusive procedure when a standard long-term Erasmus exchange cannot be practiced.

“Any student, in particular those who are not able to participate in a long-term physical mobility for studies or for traineeships, may combine a shorter physical mobility with a virtual component (blended short-term mobility). 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 learning exchange and teamwork. A blended mobility for studies must award a minimum of 3 ECTS credits.” ([eras2022], page 52).

#### 3.2 Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education

As innovation and industrial development are supported by product design projects, more ambitious capacity building actions can be developed in a broader extent. The Erasmus+ programme focusses the activities and outcomes of Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) to **eligible third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ programme**. This promotes international cooperation with non-European countries and could involve T.I.M.E. members from Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Japan. Of course, the management of virtual design collaborative design projects will have to overcome additional difficulties with time zone shifts and cultural challenges.

#### 3.3 Industrial Sponsors

Industrial companies involved in mechanical design could be interested by chairing such initiatives. Their involvement in the subject definition and students' assistance during the project is perceived as a substantial investment “in time” (which is true). But the final reports produced by top students is of course worth for some financial support. Students' association for entrepreneurship (“junior enterprise”) usually receive money for their production at the same level of expertise.

#### 3.4 Association of Universities

European Universities receive quite large budgets. A part of it could be reasonably invested in such initiatives. This should be remembered!

### 4. Green and affordable mobility recommendations

The EU promotes green, smart and affordable mobility. Some recommendations or restrictions are currently applied for researchers. Students themselves may be reluctant to air travels. They are encouraged to prefer train in the Erasmus programs. Two additional days may be counted twice when travelling by train. Such considerations should not be neglected.

### 5. Conclusions

Within Europe, a financial support from the Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme is available but will not be sufficient to cover all the costs. Sponsoring from industrial partners involved in the project can be expected. Short-term mobility can be justified within Europe due to reasonable distances. Between different continents, such an experience remains questionable from an economic and environmental point of view.

The alternate proposal, as there is a strong justification to develop multicultural design project activities, is to organize locally such projects involving incoming mobility students who are present for a full semester or more. Such proposals are developed in some engineering schools and should be encouraged, as described on the E.P.S. initiative : <http://europeanprojectsemester.eu/concept>



## Appendix A. References

[eras2022] Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Version 2 (26th January 2022).  
<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/erasmus-programme-guide-2022>

[eras2022b] Blended mobility implementation guide for Erasmus+ higher education mobility KA131 (18th July 2022).  
<https://eu.daad.de/eudownloadcenter/download/927/>