



Erasmus + Blended Intensive Programmes – Student- Survey

Results

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1. Introduction

Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) represent a new form of Blended Mobility. As part of the 2021 -2027 Erasmus+ programme, this new approach has gained prominence in European higher education. These courses are considered a valuable addition to the internationalisation strategies of Higher Education Institutions due to their flexible teaching formats, which combine online learning phases with short periods of physical mobility. While research has primarily focused on the experiences of higher education institutions, there has been limited exploration of the students' perspectives. This report presents the findings of one of the first surveys conducted among students who participated in a BIP during the 2022/2023 academic year.

Alongside general information about the structure of Erasmus+ BIPs, we offer a detailed analysis of students' motivations for participating, their past mobility experiences, and their future mobility aspirations. Additionally, we examine the extent to which these aspirations are influenced by factors specific to the attended BIPs.

The online survey was conducted as part of the work on a toolkit for implementing BIPs in collaboration between the OeAD and NUFFIC. The survey link was disseminated to the International Offices of all ECHE member institutions in Austria and the Netherlands. The International Office personnel were asked to forward the survey to students who had participated in a BIP during the 2022/2023 academic year. The survey was completed by 171 respondents.

Initially, the report provides general information about the respondents. Subsequently, it focuses on the four thematic areas of the survey, addressing the following topics:

- Information, motivation and mobility experiences
- Course Design
- Evaluation
- Recognition and organisation

2. Sample Composition

In total 171 students completed the questionnaire and provided information about personal characteristics like gender, stage of study and selected aspects of their living conditions.

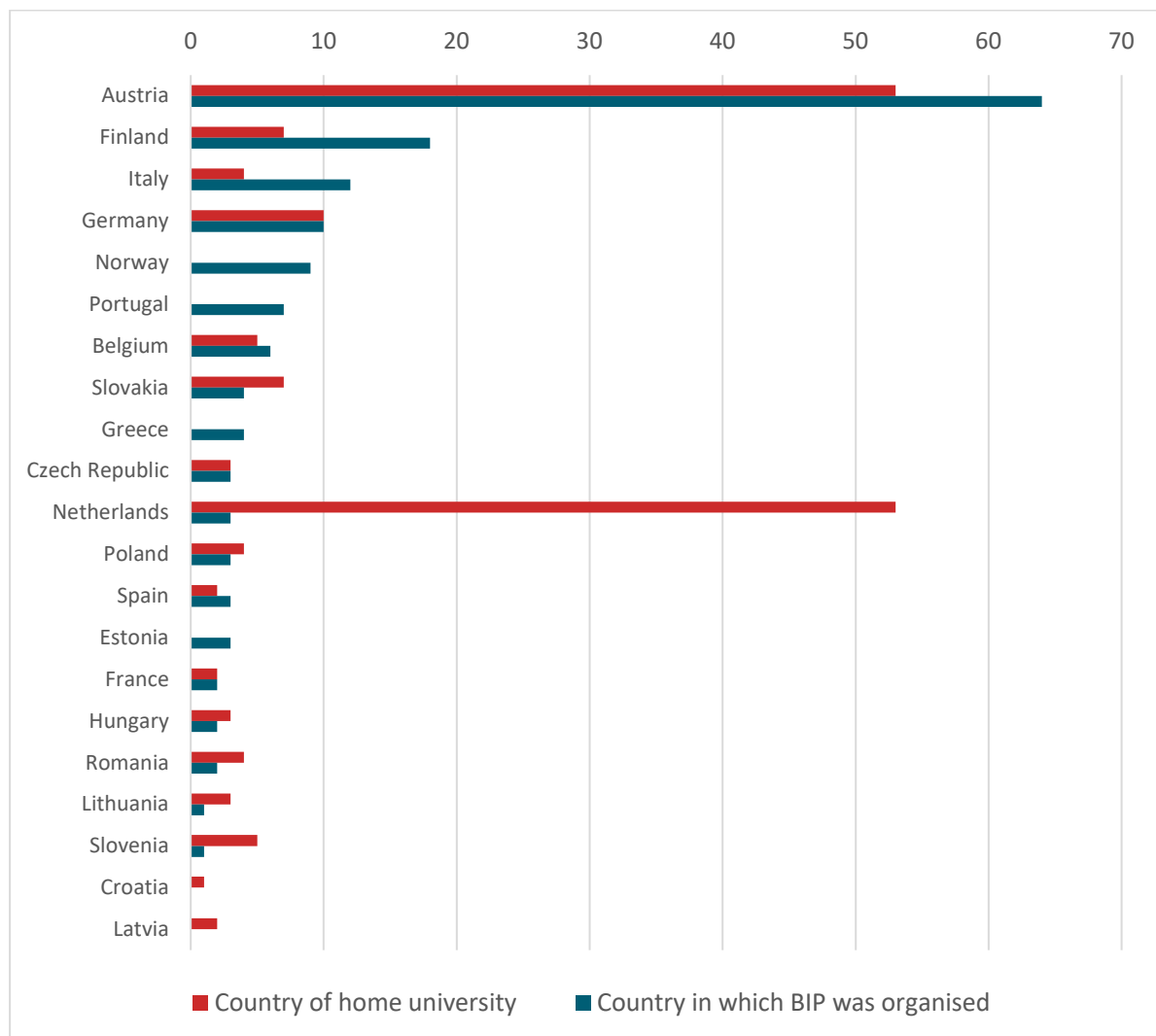
The majority are enrolled at Bachelor's level (56%), 28% at Master's level and 12% are already attaining a PhD programme. 48% of respondents classified themselves as male, 52% as female and 0,6% assigned themselves to the category "other".

70% of the students indicate that they are employed with an average of 16 hours per week.¹ 15% have caring responsibilities for children or another family member. 8 % are affected by a physical disability or a chronic illness.

¹ Outliers who stated that they worked more than 40 hours were coded as NA. This concerns four respondents. These data records were not excluded from the further analysis.

As already mentioned, International Offices at Austrian and Dutch universities were asked to forward the survey link to students who took part in an E+ BIP in the academic year 2022/2023. This sampling strategy covers both domestic students who complete a BIP at their home university (n=12) and students who had gone abroad to take part in the BIP (n= 159). The distribution shows that the vast majority used the BIP to become physically mobile. To obtain a better overview of mobility flows, mobile students were asked to provide information on the country of their home university as well as on the country in which the BIP was organized.

Figure 1: Country composition: country of home university and country in which the BIP was organized



Note 1: n= 159; only students who went abroad to take part in a BIP.

Figure 1 illustrates the country composition, with the red bars indicating the data provided by students regarding their home university. It is evident that a comparable number of students from Austrian and Dutch home universities participated in the survey, suggesting that the sampling strategy resulted in a relatively uniform distribution regarding the home university.

The blue bars illustrate a less uniform distribution. These refer to the information pertaining to the country in which the BIP was held, they show that the majority of these were held in Austria.

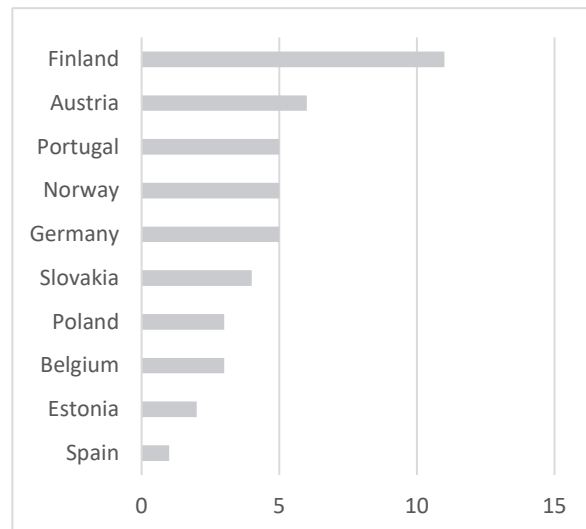
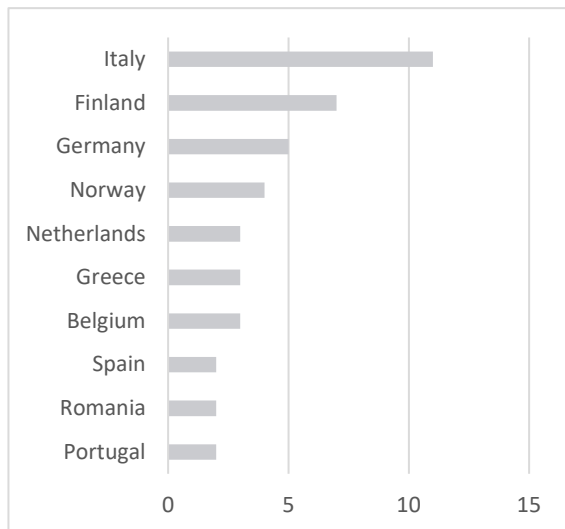
The preceding general representation is complemented by three additional graphs, which offer a more detailed examination of the three aforementioned bars. These graphs present

information on where students from Austria and the Netherlands went to attend a BIP and where students who have attended a BIP at an Austrian university come from (blue bar).

Figure 2 on the left-hand side illustrates the countries in which students from Austria were most likely to pursue a BIP. Italy, Finland and Germany are the most significant destinations, while the Netherlands occupies the fifth position. Figure 3 on the right demonstrates that Finland, Austria and Portugal are the most prominent countries of destination for students from the Netherlands.

Figure 2: BIP-Country: Students from AUT (n= 53)

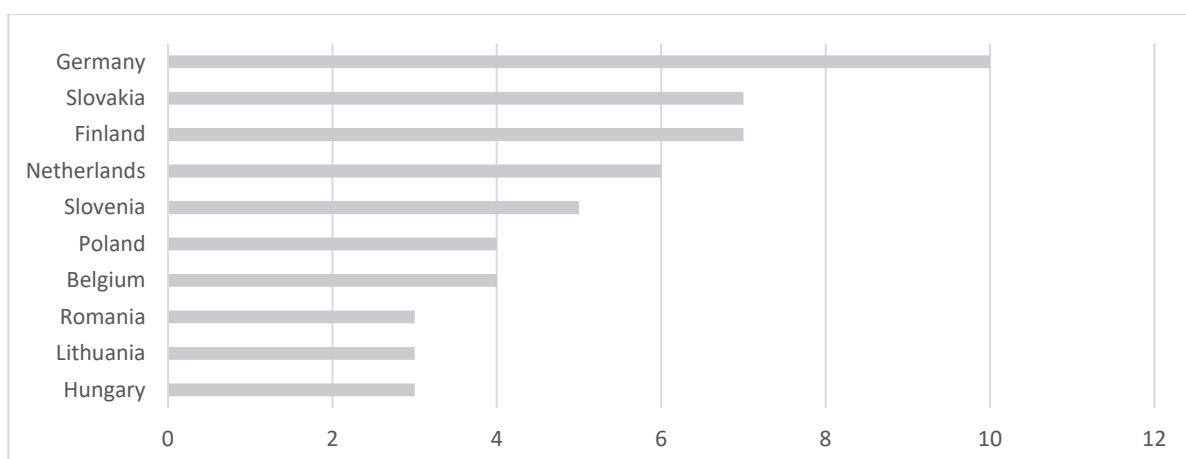
Figure 3: BIP-Country: Students from the NL (n= 53)



Note 2: The presentation is limited to the 10 most frequently mentioned destinations.

Finally, we direct our attention to the BIPs at Austrian Universities. 64 respondents stated that they had travelled to attend a BIP in Austria. Figure 4 shows the destination of their home universities. The majority of students originated from Germany, followed by Slovakia, Finland and the Netherlands.

Figure 4: Origin of Students who took part in a BIP at an Austrian university (n= 64)



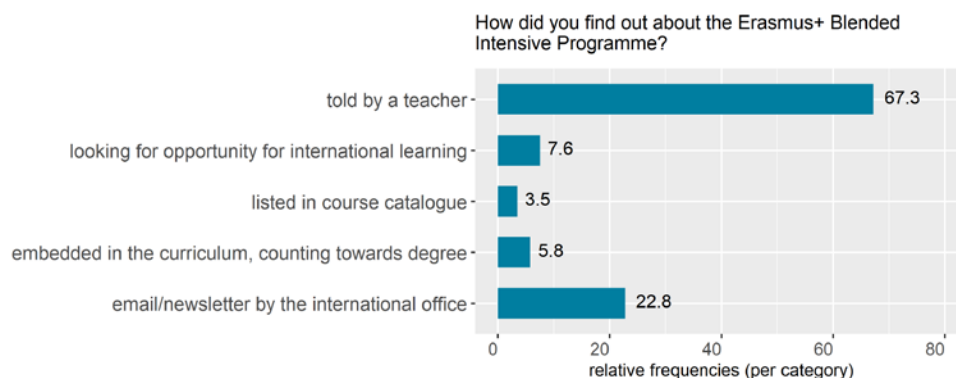
Note: The presentation is limited to the 10 most frequently mentioned destinations.

3. Information, motivation and mobility experiences and aspirations

Our survey asked how students found out about the Blended Intensive Programme they attended and what their main reasons were for taking part in the course.

Figure 5 illustrates that nearly 70% of respondents indicated that they were informed by a teacher. By a wide margin, emails/newsletters were the second most important source of information (23%). It is notable that only a small number of respondents indicated that BIPs were listed in the course catalogue and/or embedded in the curriculum.

Figure 5: Information about the Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programmes

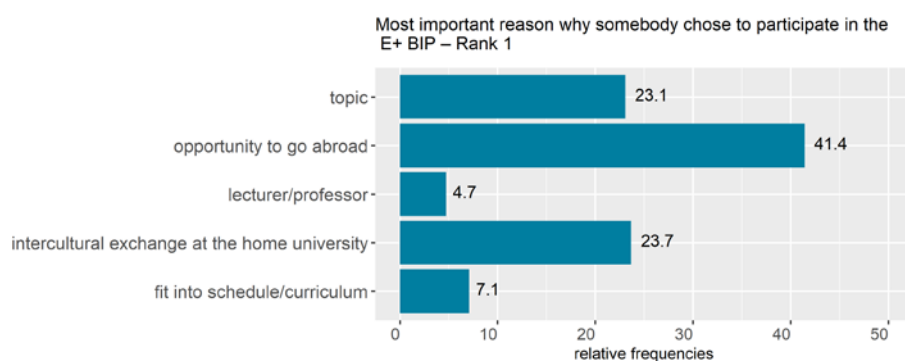


Note: multiple choice question

The students were requested to prioritise a series of potential motivations for engaging in an Erasmus+ BIP, with the objective of identifying their three most significant reasons. Figure 6 shows the frequency of ranking the provided reasons as the most important one for participating in the Erasmus+ BIP. The most frequently mentioned motive is that of undertaking a period of study abroad (41%), followed by the topic of the course and the opportunity to experience intercultural exchange at the home institution. The approval rate for the two categories "opportunity to go abroad" (41%) and "intercultural exchange at the home university" (24%) clearly demonstrates that aspects of internationalisation are the primary motivators for young people's decision to pursue a stay abroad, with a total of 65%. For approximately one in four students the topic of the BIP was the most influential factor in their decision. This can be interpreted as a positive indicator that BIPs are also being utilised to address novel and innovative topics.

Professors and lecturers, along with the courses fitting in the curriculum were rarely ranked first. The low importance attributed to lecturers in particular may also be due to the fact that few renowned professors engage in this new teaching format, which ties up a considerable amount of resources, especially during the initial conception phase.

Figure 6: Most important reason to participate in an Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme

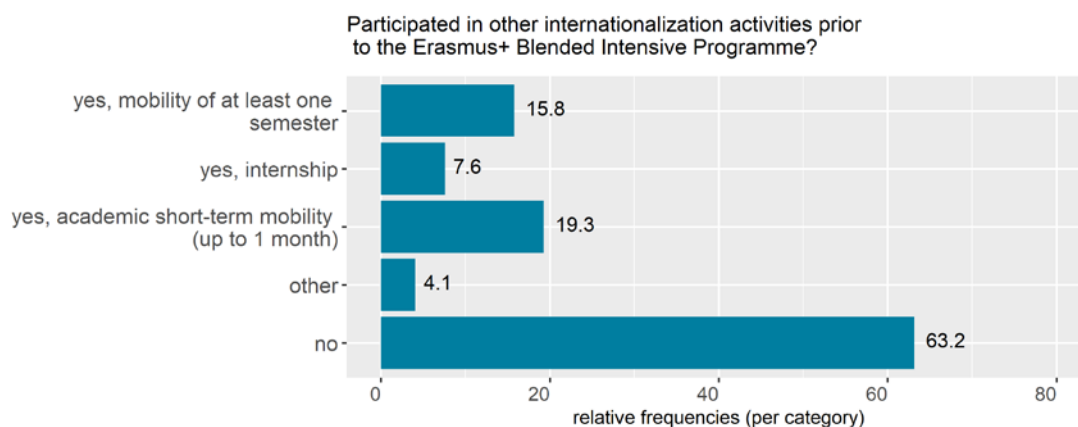


In addition, prior experiences with study-related mobility and mobility aspirations for the future were examined.

It is notable that 63% of the respondents had no prior experience with study-related mobility. It can be posited that this considerable proportion of students without any prior experience of mobility is attributable to the fact that 60% of respondents are currently engaged in studies leading to a Bachelor's degree. However, when the sub-sample of Master's students is taken into account, the general pattern remains, albeit weakened. The category "no mobility experiences" is indeed lower (45%) for Master's students, yet students without mobility experience remain the largest group, followed by students who have undertaken an academic short-term mobility (32%) and those who have completed an exchange semester (21%).

Individuals with prior experience of study-related mobility were invited to provide further details regarding the duration and nature of their stay (Figure 7). This encompassed periods of at least one academic semester, internships, and other forms of short-term academic mobility.

Figure 7: Experiences with study-related mobility



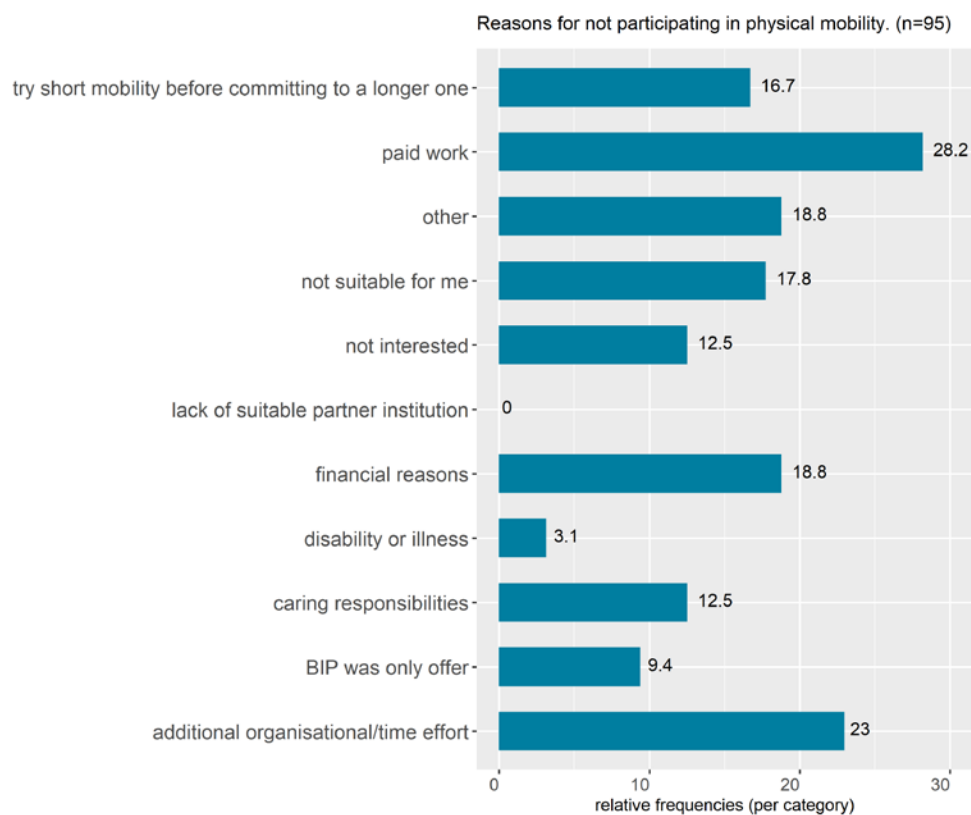
Note: Multiple choice question

44% of the respondents plan to go abroad in the future. Interestingly, it is not possible to identify a preference for the type of stay abroad (internship, at least one semester, academic short-term mobility (up to 1 month)).

36% are undecided and 20% indicate that they do not have any plans to become mobile in the future. Those who have no plans and those who are still undecided were asked to state why

they could not currently imagine going abroad (see Figure 8). It should be noted that the question was a multiple-choice question so that several reasons could be selected.

Figure 8: Reasons for not planning or being undecided about becoming physically mobile



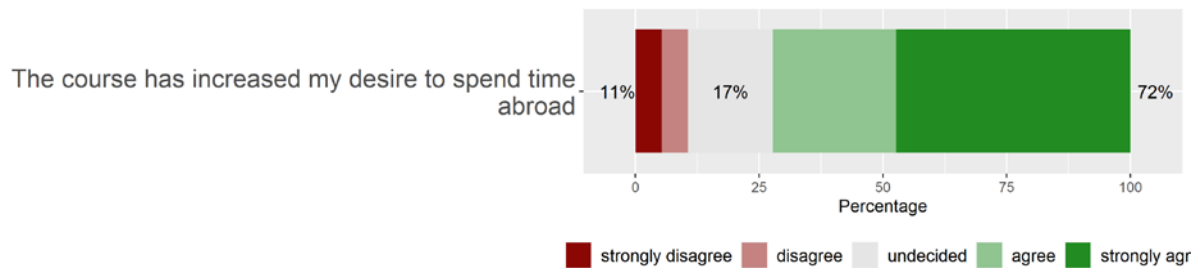
Note: Multiple choice question

While employment is the most frequently cited reason (28%), additional organizational/time effort was mentioned by 23% of respondents. 19% indicate that finances are an impediment. It is striking that almost one in five students express the opinion that a stay abroad is not suitable for them (18%). In addition to those who express no interest (13%), there is potential for more mobility that needs to be addressed through initiatives to raise awareness and provide information. 16% wanted to try short mobility before committing to a longer one.

The general question whether the course had increased the students' desire to spend time abroad was generally answered positively. In this respect, the course also achieved the goal of arousing curiosity for future study-related mobilities (see Figure 9).

When focusing on the subsample of those 16% who indicated that the BIP was their test run for mobility, the respective question was answered more negatively. Only 38% indicated that the course had a positive effect on their desire to spend time abroad, in comparison to 72% among the whole sample. 50% were neutral, indicating that the BIP had no effect on the individual desire to spend time abroad. These results shows that the test run only produced a positive outcome in 40% of cases, which would not be a very good attestation for the respective BIPs. For a few it had even a detrimental effect. It should be noted that the size of this subsample is relatively limited, and the results must be interpreted with caution.

Figure 9: Influence of the course on the motivation to spend time abroad



4. Course design and evaluation

In addition, we looked at the implementation of the respective Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme, its course design as well as the evaluation of the students. It is important to note that the survey sample consists of students and not BIPs, so it cannot be ruled out that several students' statements refer to one and the same BIP. Interpretations of quantities need to keep in mind, that they are based on the experiences of individual students rather than the performance of specific BIPs.

79% of the students indicate that in the BIP they attended the online part took place before the physical part, with 21% reporting a tripartite sequence of online physical online. 18% say that the physical part took place before the online phase. Nearly 70% agree or strongly agree with the statement that *“The sequence of the activities was right and conducive to learning success (online/physical)”*. Although this draws a rather positive picture of the strategic combination of online and physical parts, the findings on the subjective assessment of the student’s learning success raise the question, whether the distribution of learning activities is strategically intended by the teacher. Respondents were asked to evaluate their learning success with regard to two comparisons. The question reads as followed: Please consider everything you learned – both subject-specific knowledge and skills as well as so called “soft” skills – during the Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme. How would you say your learning was divided regarding the physical part vs. the online part (first comparison) and course time vs. self-study/asynchronous teaching (second comparison) respectively?

The graph on the left-hand side (Figure 10) provides the results of the first comparison, online versus physical parts of the E+ BIP. The data show a very clear tendency, namely that most of the learning took place during the physical phase of the BIP. The graph on the right-hand side (Figure 11) side provides the results of the second comparison, course time vs. asynchronous learning and teaching. In this regard the distribution is flatter and more even, nevertheless a clear tendency towards course time can be seen.

Figure 10: learning success – online vs. physical part

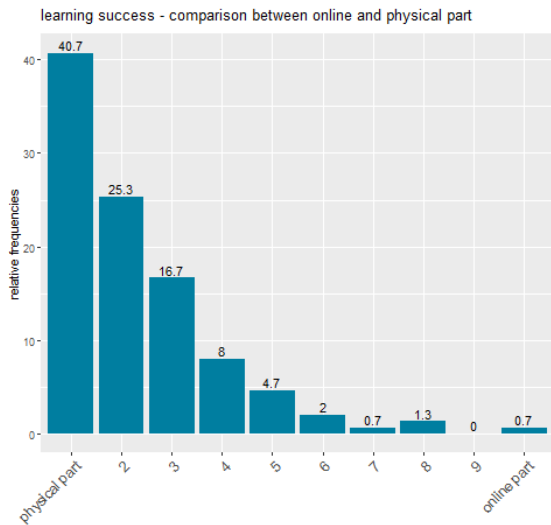
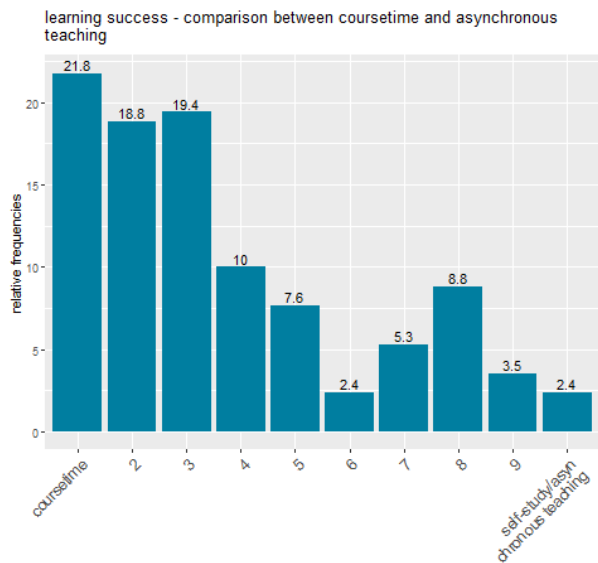


Figure 11: learning success coursetime vs. self-study/asynchronous teaching

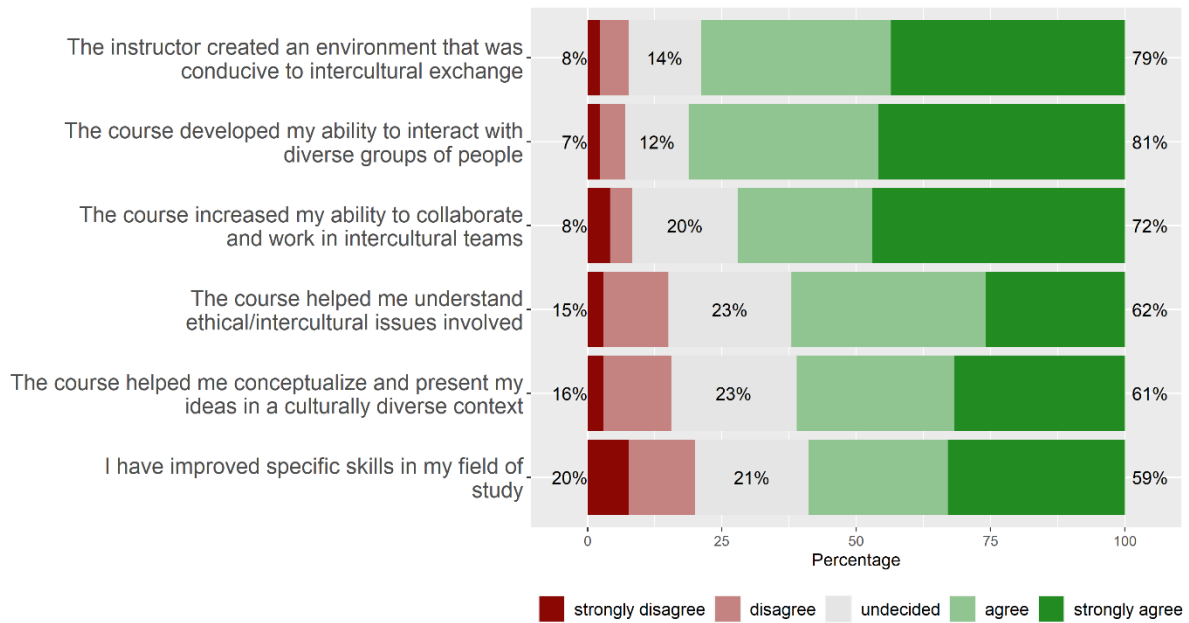


The evaluation questions yielded the conclusion that the courses were generally well received. When asked whether the course would be recommended to others, as many as 95% responded in the affirmative.

A closer examination of the various items (see Figure 12) revealed that the courses were rated more highly in terms of facilitating intercultural exchange than in terms of drawing intercultural competences from them and applying them in a reflexive manner, like the ability to transmit arguments and content in an intercultural setting. More precisely, the three upper items address intercultural exchange as they ask to what extent the course was conducive to intercultural exchange, interacting in diverse groups of people or collaborating and working in intercultural teams. The approval rates are between 72 and 81%.

The three items to the bottom more specifically address situations of transmission process in intercultural settings, both in terms of improving students' respective intercultural skills and teaching subject specific skills. They ask to what extent the course helped to understand intercultural issues involved, in how far the course helped to conceptualise and present ideas in a culturally diverse context and whether specific skills in the field of study could be improved. The approval rates are between 59 and 62%.

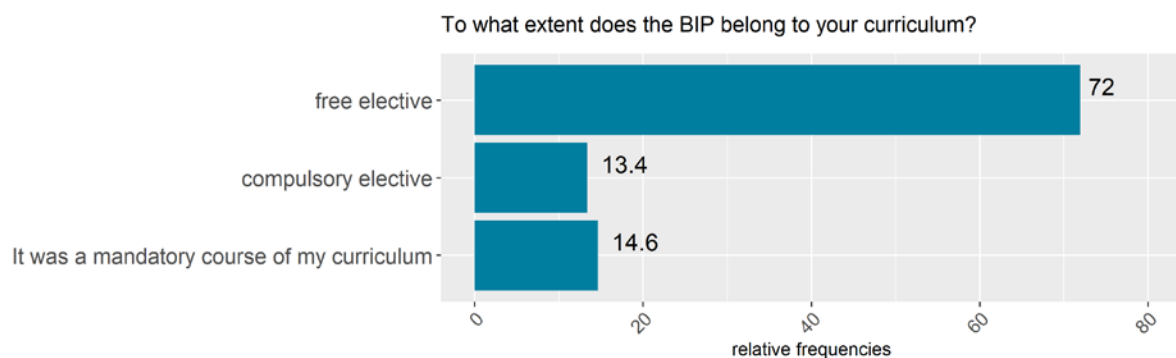
Figure 12: Evaluation



5. Recognition and organisation

With regard to recognition, our data show an even distribution between those who had to submit an application for the recognition of examinations/ECTS credits (51%) and those students who report that ECTS credits of the E+ BIP were recognized automatically (49%). These proportions are not consistent with the information on whether an E+ BIP was part of the curriculum or not (Figure 13). 72% of the students indicate that the E+ BIP they attended was a free elective, 13% attended the course as compulsory elective. For only roughly 15% of the students it was a mandatory course of the curriculum. Although only 15% of students stated that their E+BIP was part of the curriculum, 49% of students had their ECTS automatically recognised. This leads to the conclusion that there are also automatic recognition processes in place for free or compulsory electives.

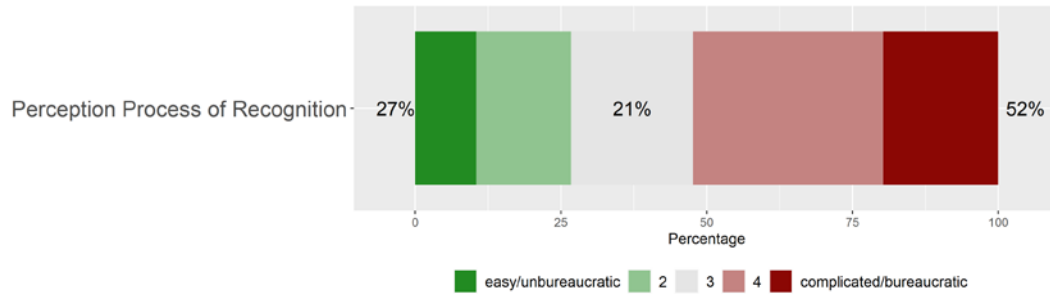
Figure 13: Curricular embedding of the BIPs



Those who had to apply for the recognition were asked how they perceived the process of recognition – from easy and unbureaucratic to complicated and bureaucratic (see Figure 14).

52% perceived the recognition process as complicated/bureaucratic, whereas 27% perceived the process as easy and unbureaucratic

Figure 14: Perception of the Recognition Process



Finally, we assessed how students perceived organizational matters within the following fields:

- Guidance on finding accommodation
- Process of registration for the course
- Punctual payment of the grant
- Assistance with dealing with (administrative) questions or complaints
- Help with inclusion needs and information about additional support

The answers paint a positive picture. Between 64 and 69% of all respondents stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the respective service.

The following graph (Figure 15) provides an impression of how much of the expenses were covered by the Erasmus+ grant. Nearly 80% of the students could cover more than 50% of their expenses with the grant. 45% even indicate that they could cover more than 76%.

Figure 15: Financial support by the Erasmus+ grant

