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BLENDED INTENSIVE PROGRAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE STUDENTS, IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

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Introduction



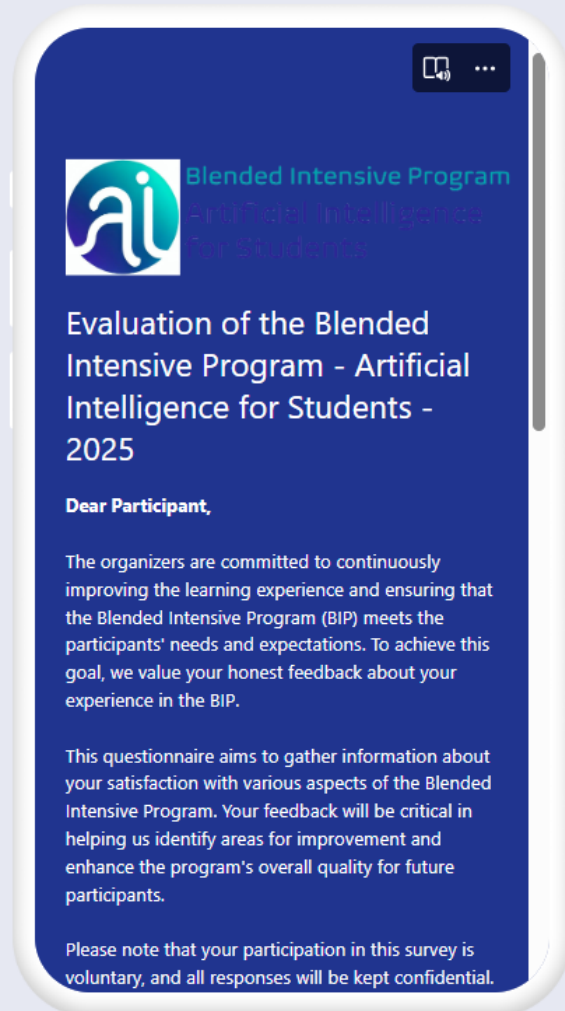
- **Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) are innovative, short-term educational initiatives under the Erasmus+ framework, combining physical mobility with virtual learning components.**
- These programmes are designed to promote interdisciplinary learning and introduce innovative teaching methods, making them accessible to students and staff across various academic fields and study cycles.
- They provide valuable mobility opportunities, particularly beneficial for students unable to commit to traditional long-term exchanges such as semester or year-long programmes.
- BIPs promote transnational and transdisciplinary collaboration, often focusing on global challenges and emergent topics, aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This study investigates the self-reported impacts on students participating in five BIPs conducted over three years.

Methodology



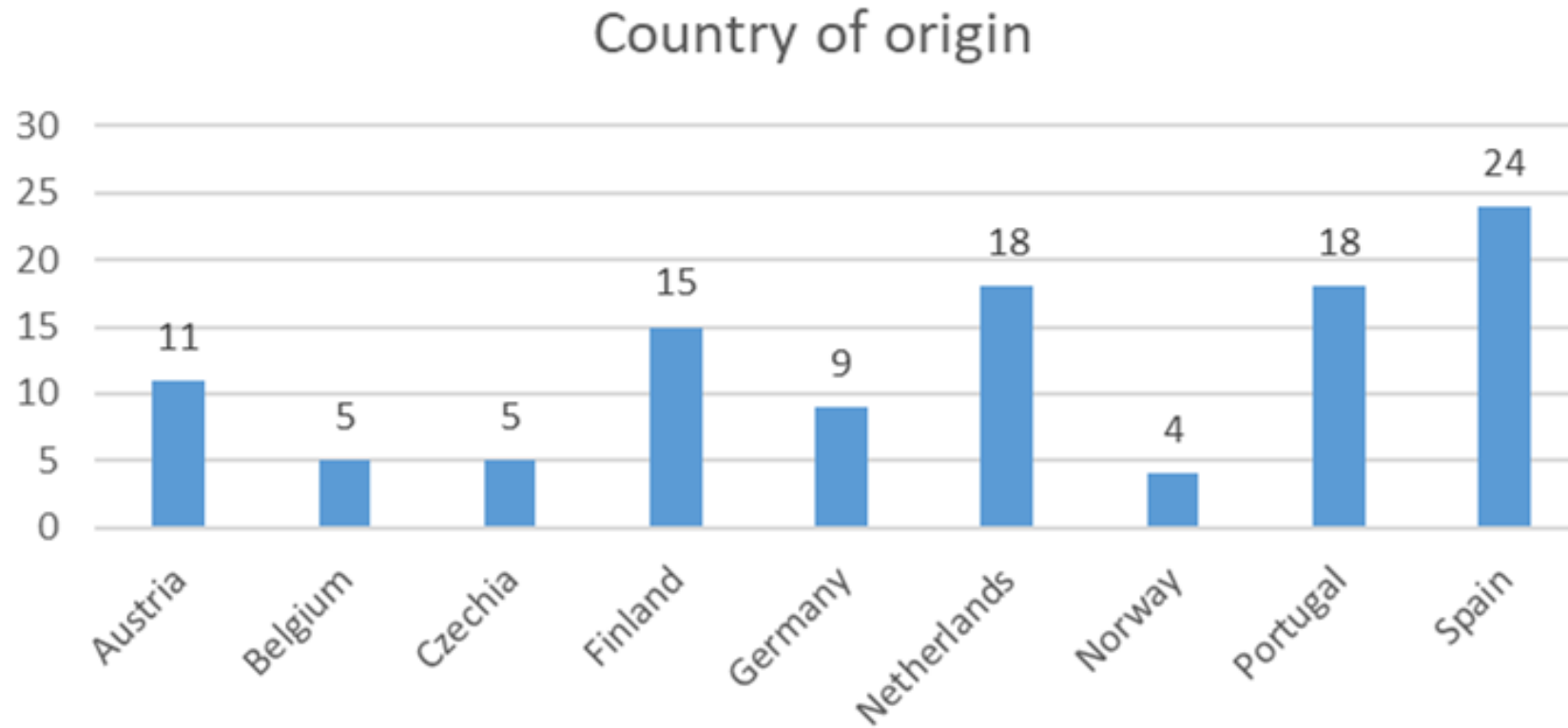
- **Several higher education institutions from different European countries collaboratively organised five BIPs involving a total of 156 students and more than 50 teachers and facilitators.**
- Typically, each BIP spanned approximately two months, consisting of at least two online sessions complemented by one intensive in-person week, awarding students three ECT credits upon completion.
- Programme topics included Global Health and Social Challenges, Digital Health and Emerging Technologies in Healthcare, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its Applications in Learning, Research, and Clinical Practice, and Respiratory Physiotherapy for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) patients.

Results



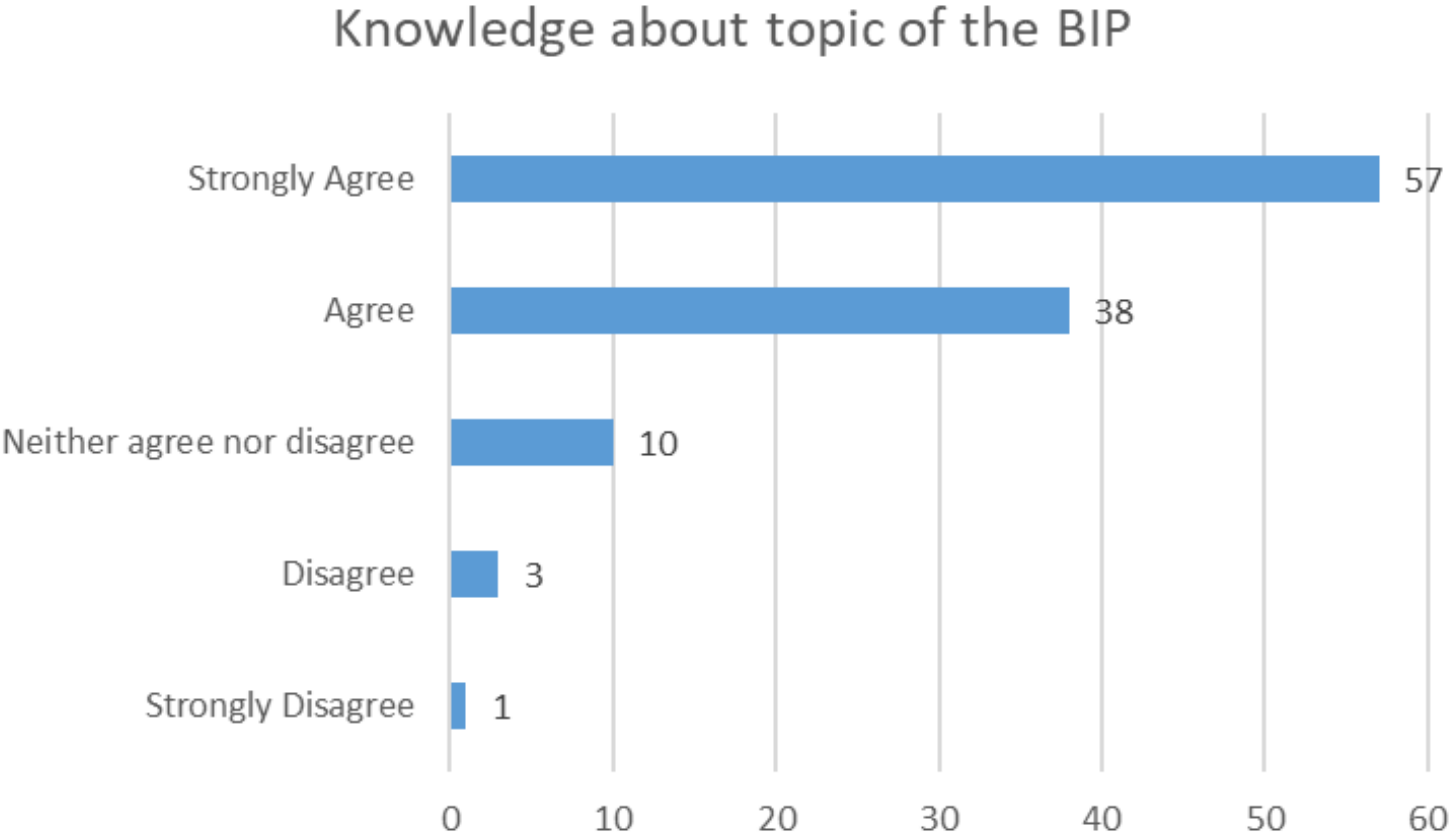
- To assess the outcomes of the programs, student feedback was collected using an online questionnaire administered after the completion of each BIP.
- The survey included closed-ended items based on a Likert scale, as well as open-ended questions to capture individual reflections. Areas covered included perceptions of knowledge development, skills acquisition, relevance to professional practice, and overall quality of the experience. The responses were aggregated for descriptive analysis.
- **Out of the 156 students who participated in the programme, 111 completed the survey, representing approximately 71% of the total participants.**

Results



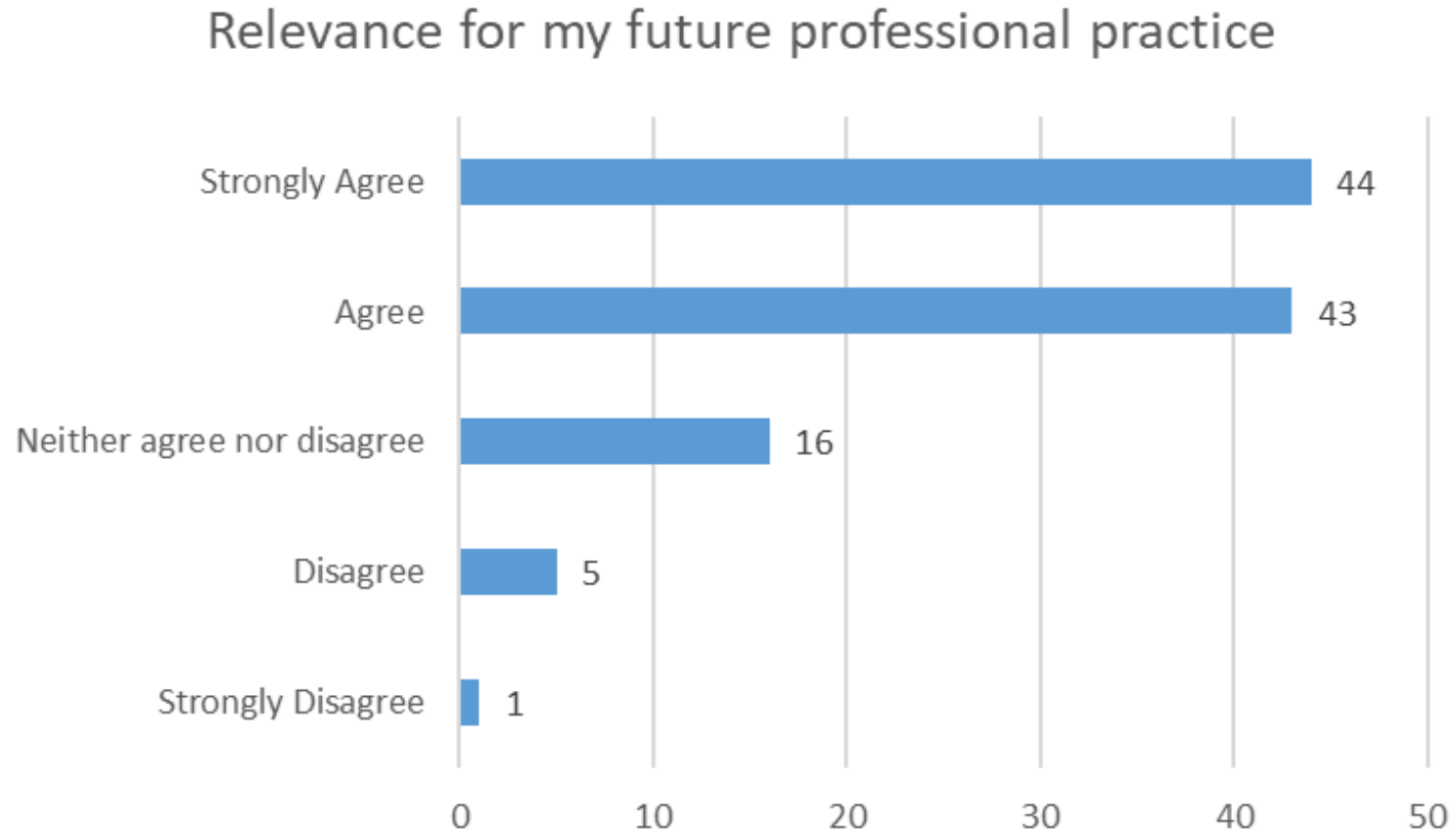
Distribution of participants by country of origin. Spain recorded the highest number of participants (n=24), followed by the Netherlands and Portugal (n=18 each), and Finland (n=15). Austria (n=11) and Germany (n=9) also showed some participation. Belgium and Czechia contributed five participants each, while Norway accounted for four. The data indicate a varied level of involvement across participating countries in the Blended Intensive Programs.

Results



A high proportion of participants reported that the BIP contributed positively to their knowledge of the topic addressed. As illustrated in the figure, 57 respondents (51.4%) selected "Strongly Agree" and 38 (34.2%) selected "Agree" with the statement "Participating in this BIP increased my knowledge about the topic of the BIP." Ten participants (9.0%) indicated a neutral response, while 3 (2.7%) disagreed and 1 (0.9%) strongly disagreed. Overall, 85.6% of respondents acknowledged the BIP as beneficial in enhancing their understanding of the subject area.

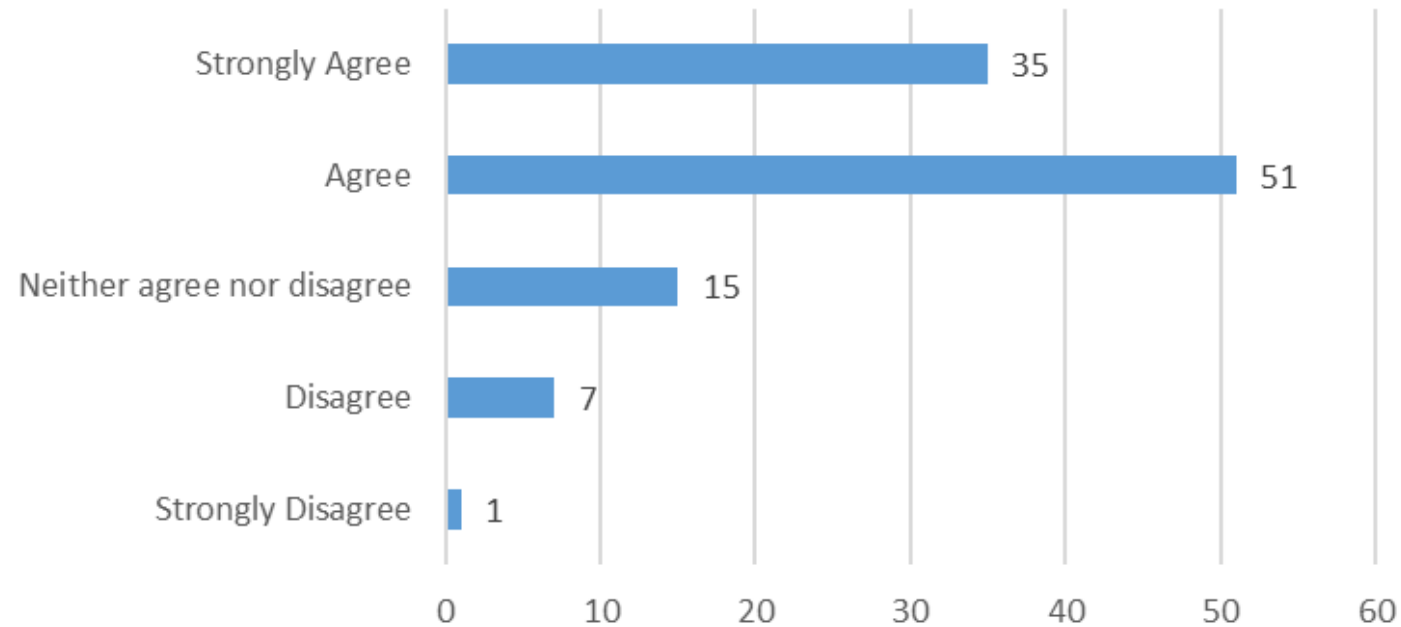
Results



Participants were asked to evaluate whether participating in the BIP facilitated their understanding of its relevance for future professional practice. As shown, 44 respondents (39.6%) selected "Strongly Agree" and 43 (38.7%) selected "Agree". Sixteen participants (14.4%) chose "Neither agree nor disagree", while 5 (4.5%) selected "Disagree" and 1 respondent (0.9%) selected "Strongly Disagree". These results suggest that 78.3% of participants perceived the BIP as relevant to their future professional roles.

Results

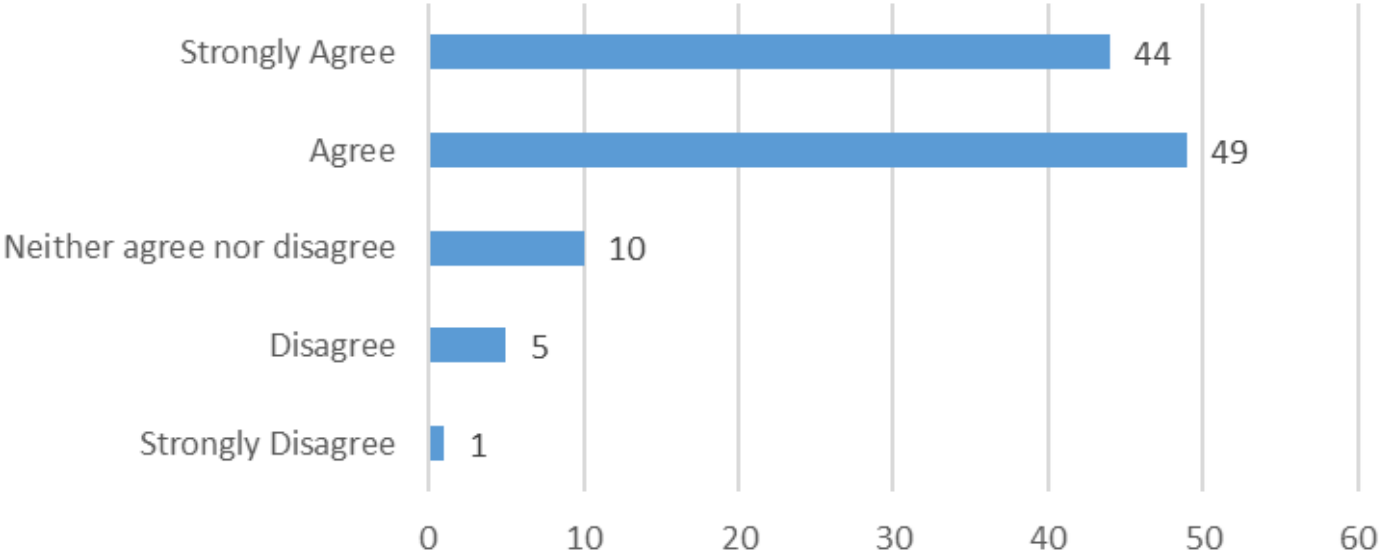
The lectures (online/presential) increase my knowledge about the topics of the BIP



Also, participants were asked to evaluate whether the lectures—both online and in-person—provided relevant information to increase their knowledge about the BIP topics. As shown, 51 respondents (45.9%) selected "Agree" and 35 (31.5%) selected "Strongly Agree". Fifteen participants (13.5%) expressed a neutral stance, while 7 (6.3%) selected "Disagree" and 1 respondent (0.9%) selected "Strongly Disagree". These results suggest that 77.4% of participants found the lectures effective in supporting their learning within the BIP.

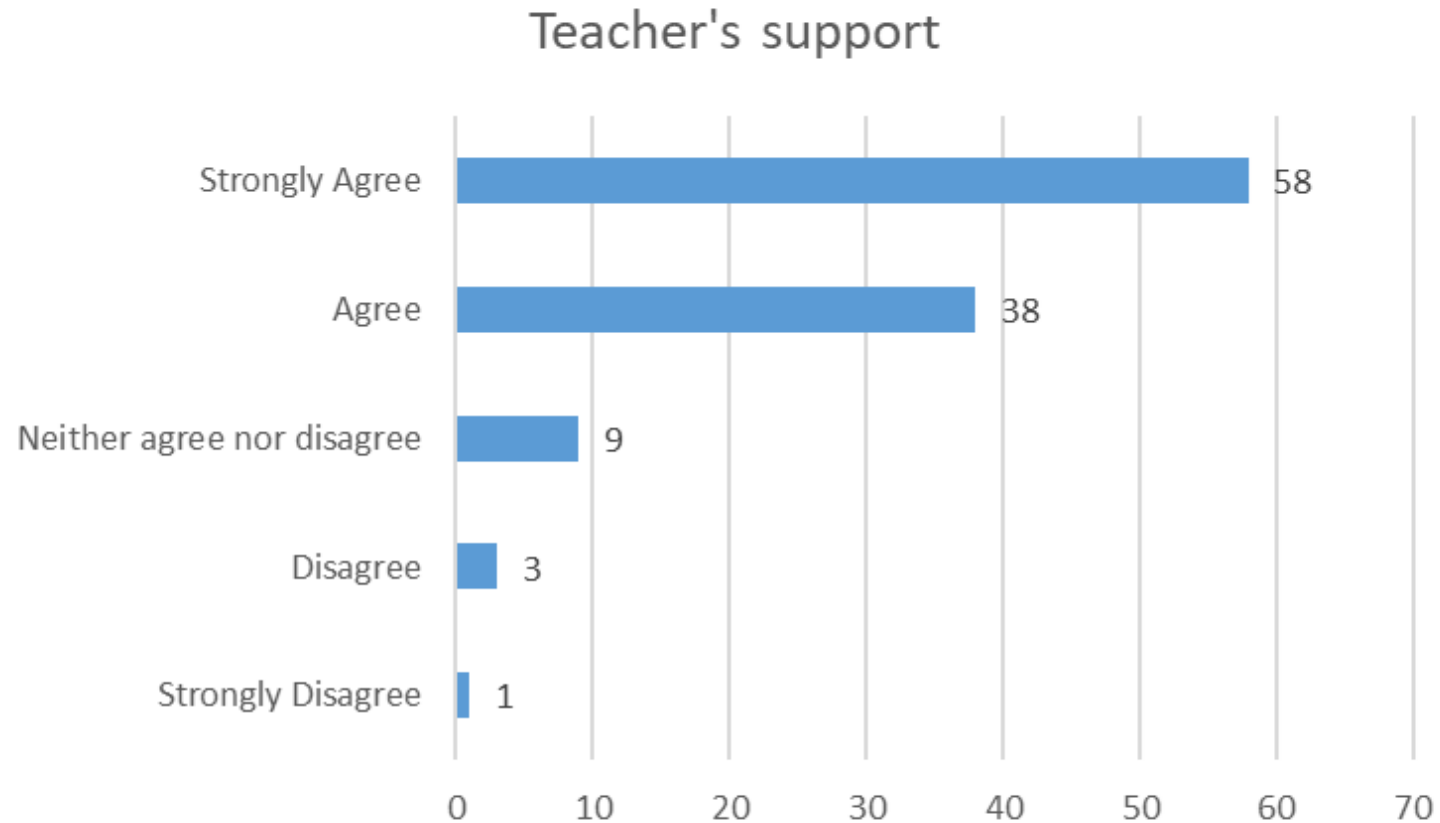
Results

The activities (online/presential) allow me to develop knowledge and skills related the topics of the BIP



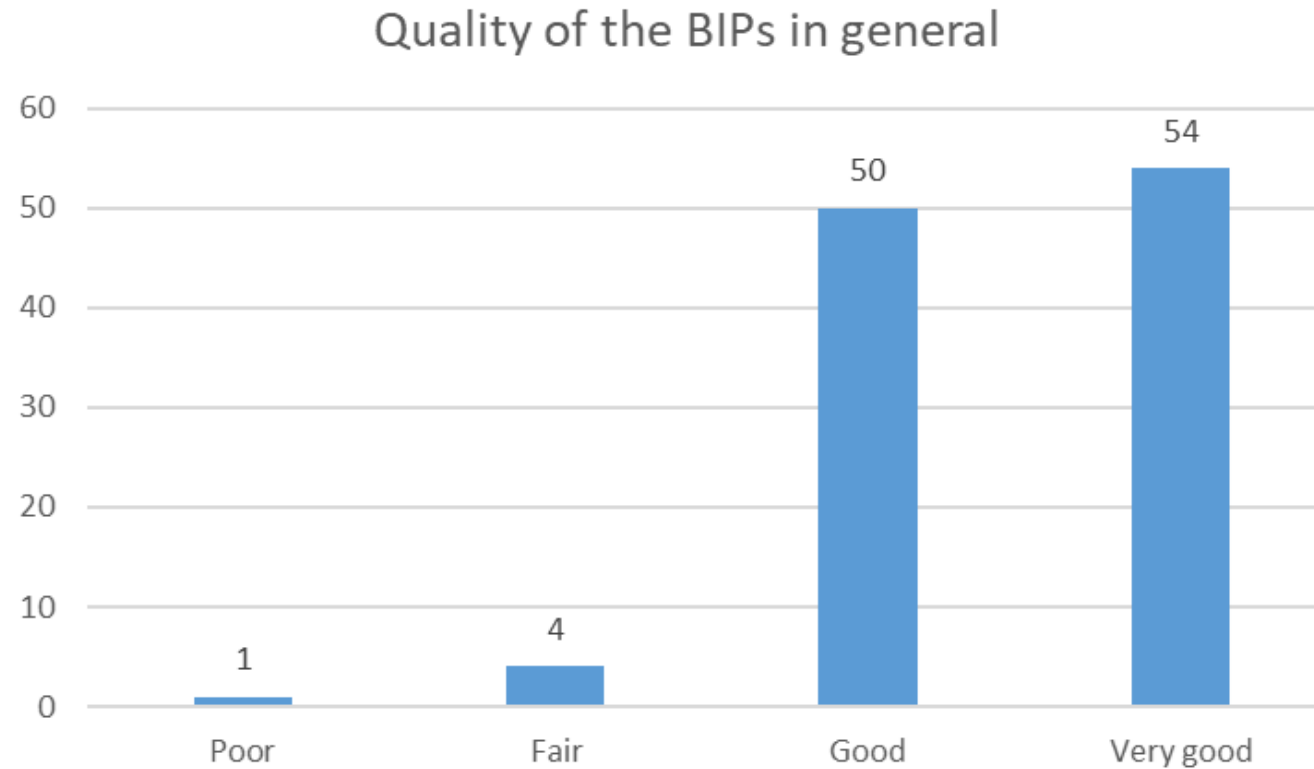
Regarding the statement “The activities (online/presential) allow me to develop further knowledge and skills related to the topics of the BIP”, most respondents reported positive outcomes. As shown, 49 participants (44.1%) selected "Agree" and 44 (39.6%) selected "Strongly Agree". Ten respondents (9.0%) expressed neutrality, while 5 (4.5%) selected "Disagree" and 1 (0.9%) selected "Strongly Disagree". In total, 83.7% of participants perceived the activities as effective in supporting their knowledge and skill development.

Results



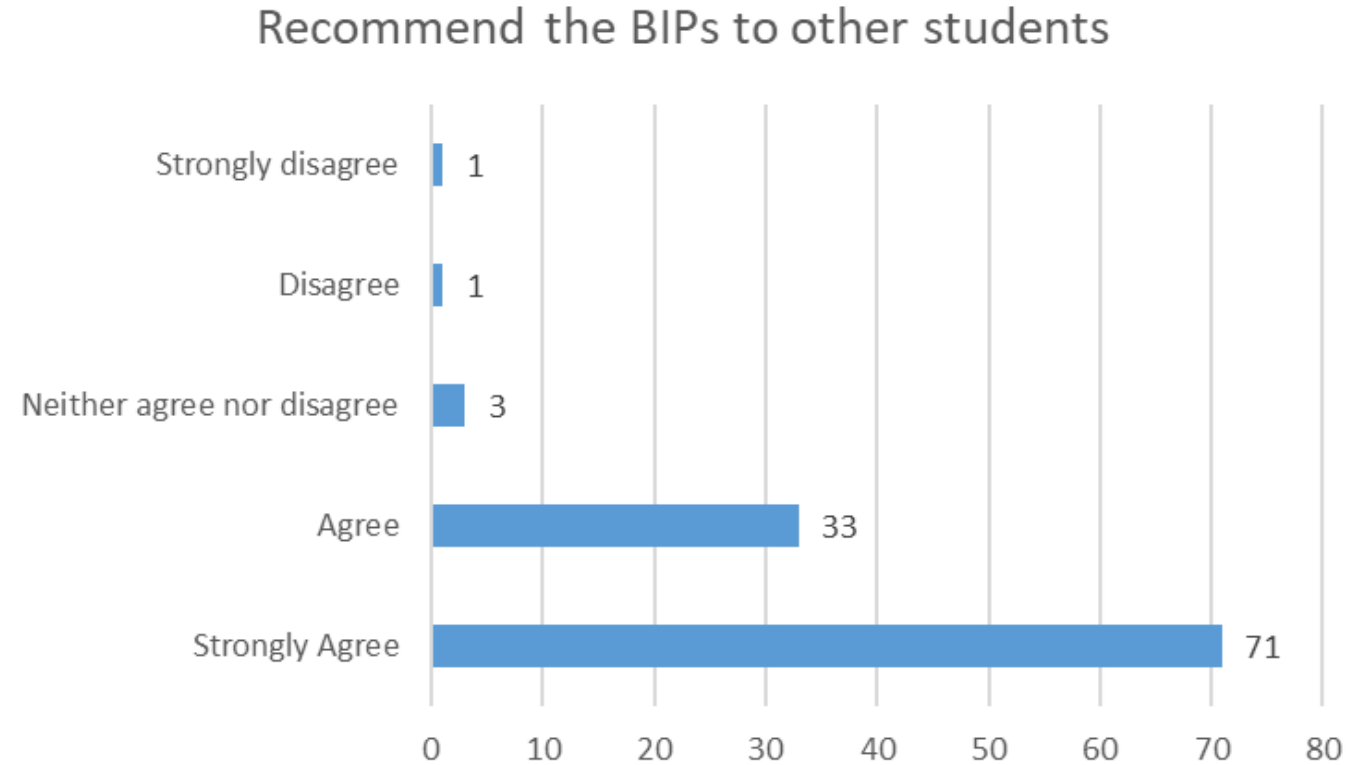
Participants were asked to evaluate the extent to which the teachers involved in the online and presential sessions supported their learning process. As depicted, 58 respondents (52.3%) selected "Strongly Agree" and 38 (34.2%) selected "Agree". Nine participants (8.1%) chose "Neither agree nor disagree", while 3 (2.7%) selected "Disagree" and 1 (0.9%) selected "Strongly Disagree". These results indicate that 86.5% of respondents perceived the teaching staff as supportive of their learning throughout the BIP.

Results



Participants were invited also to rate the overall quality of the BIPs. As shown, 54 respondents (48.6%) rated the programme as "Very Good" and 50 (45.0%) as "Good". A small number rated the programme as "Fair" (n=4; 3.6%) or "Poor" (n=1; 0.9%). These findings suggest that 93.7% of participants perceived the BIP as being of good or very good quality.

Results



Finally, participants were asked whether they would recommend the BIPs to other students. As illustrated in the figure, 71 respondents (64.0%) selected "Strongly Agree" and 33 (29.7%) selected "Agree". A small number chose "Neither agree nor disagree" (n=3; 2.7%), "Disagree" (n=1; 0.9%), or "Strongly Disagree" (n=1; 0.9%). In total, 93.7% of respondents expressed a willingness to recommend the BIP to their peers, indicating a high level of overall satisfaction and perceived value.

Conclusions

- **BIPs enhance learning and skills:** Students reported improvements in knowledge, skills, and professional competencies, particularly through topic-specific content and staff support.
- **Blended format is highly valued:** The combination of online and in-person activities was appreciated for balancing theoretical learning with practical application.
- **High satisfaction and relevance:** Participants expressed strong satisfaction and a willingness to recommend BIPs, noting their relevance to future professional roles.
- **An inclusive and strategic alternative:** BIPs offer a flexible, accessible alternative to traditional mobility, aligned with sustainability goals and suited for wider curricular integration in Europe.

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