

HANDBOOK and POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



Integrating Digital
Collaborative
Environments into
Joint Programmes



Target groups

Teaching and Administrative staff involved
in Joint Programmes,
Higher Education Institutions;
National and European HE authorities

About GO-DIJIP

The [GO-DIJIP project](#) is a call to action inviting Joint Programmes coordinators, managers, teachers and students to explore and share existing practices and innovative learning and teaching methodologies. It aims to develop a digitalized, innovative, collaborative and quality-oriented Higher Education, providing instruments to sustainably mainstream new forms of virtual teaching and learning.

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This Handbook represents the fourth Intellectual Output of GO-DIJIP.

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Glossary

Blended learning: A model combining face-to-face classroom teaching and the innovative use of ICT technologies. Experts often associate blended learning with the redesign of the educational environment and the learning experience, thus contributing to the creation of a “community of inquiry”¹.

Blended Mobility: combination of physical mobility with a virtual component, aimed at facilitating collaborative online learning and teamwork. The virtual component can be used to prepare students for physical mobility, or it can be used after physical mobility, to deepen cultural learning, or it can even take place during the physical mobility to directly enhance some aspects of it².

iOOCs: Interactive Open Online Courses, combining content presented in a similar format to MOOCs, with an interactive component which includes weekly synchronous discussion sessions in small groups with the support of a dialogue facilitator, to encourage intercultural communication³.

Joint programme: the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes defines a ‘joint programme’ as ‘an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions (HEIs) from EHEA countries, and leading to double/multiple degrees or a joint degree’. This is the most official definition of a joint programme, although clearly a joint programme can be offered by institutions from different countries, whether or not (some of) these institutions are located within or outside of the EHEA⁴.

Joint degree: the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes defines a ‘joint degree’ as ‘a single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme’⁵.

Double / multiple degrees: the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes defines ‘double or multiple degrees’ as ‘separate degrees awarded by HEIs offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme (if two degrees are awarded by two institutions, this is a ‘double degree’)’⁶.

MOOC: MOOC stands for massive open online course. Massive, as there is generally no participation limit, thousands can enrol for the same course. Open, as it is accessible to a large audience of learners: the hosting institution usually does not require any formal entry requirement and the course is free of charge. The whole course is delivered online, including assessment and additional services (even though personal contact with other participants or tutors is a possibility).

Online degree programmes: A degree programme, which the student attends fully or predominantly online.

Virtual mobility: Educational practices that allow students from one educational institution to follow courses organised at a different institution (usually based in a different country) without having to leave home. The focus of Virtual Mobility is to provide subject knowledge by taking advantage

¹ Source: <https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/digihe%20new%20version.pdf>

² Source: <https://frames-project.eu/outputs/toolkit/>

³ Source: <https://frames-project.eu/outputs/toolkit/>

⁴ Source: <https://impea.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Joint-Programmes-from-A-to-Z-Report-2020.pdf>

⁵ Source: <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/definitions/>

⁶ Source: <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/definitions/>

of complementary expertise, and does not require the student to interact with peers from the host institution⁷.

Virtual exchange: Virtual Exchange (VE) is a practice that consists of sustained, technology-enabled, people-to-people online exchange sessions in which constructive communication and interaction take place with the support of educators or facilitators

⁷ Source: <https://frames-project.eu/outputs/toolkit/>

Aim and structure of the Handbook

The aim of this Handbook is to guide Joint Programme (JP) coordinators, higher education institutions (HEIs), and policy makers in sustainably integrating digital collaborative elements into JPs, beyond risk-mitigation approaches.

The Handbook is structured around three different sections. The first section analyses the past and current context of both Joint Programmes and Digitally Enhanced Learning and Teaching (DELT) at international and national level.

The second section is dedicated to JP coordinators and HEIs: it provides practical guidelines and examples on how to make best use of digitalisation in the planning, design, implementation and marketing of JP. It is mainly intended to support JP coordinators in innovating their JP, making them more attractive and effective in responding to evolving labour market needs. At the same time, HEIs could use the Handbook to support innovation in JP design and development at institutional level and to replicate some features in international or even local study courses to encourage internationalisation at home through virtual forms.

The third section of the Handbook is dedicated to local, national and international stakeholders and policy makers, with the goal to stimulate reflection on current challenges and barriers hindering the full development of JP, including the integration of digitally enhanced learning and teaching in joint curricula.

The Handbook was developed in the framework of the Erasmus+ Partnerships for Digital Education Readiness project [GO-DIJP: Integrating digital collaborative environments into joint programmes](#). It gathers many of the materials that were developed under the project, including training resources and tools, case studies, videos, etc. so as to facilitate later use and sustainable exploitation of the project outputs.

Academic and administrative staff, JP coordinators, as well as JP students and alumni, were actively involved in the development of this Handbook. We believe that, as innovation continues to emerge bottom up, and in rather unpredictable ways, it is essential to ensure exchange and cooperation at all levels and among all stakeholders in this field, so as to also stimulate the necessary changes at policy/legal level. This is even the more relevant considering that the topic of digitalisation in JP is still rather new and unexplored. As the European University Association (EUA) puts it, “the innovative ideas will likely come from students and staff, not from institutional leadership, and not from the ministries. But institutional, national and European level measures could provide an important contribution through strategies, elimination of obstacles and provision of services and infrastructures”⁸.

⁸ <https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/digihe%20new%20version.pdf> , p. 52



Integrating Digital
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HANDBOOK and POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

PART 1

International and National context *of*

*Joint Programmes and Digitally Enhanced
Learning and Teaching*



Joint programmes

Joint programmes in the European Higher Education Area

The creation and development of JPs (and joint degrees) have been encouraged by the **Bologna Process** as a key element in supporting internationalisation of HEIs. After more than 20 years, JPs continue to be extremely relevant in addressing Bologna objectives: the development of JPs automatically leads to increased collaboration not only in joint curriculum development, but also in supporting student mobility, automatic credit transfer, and collaboration in quality assurance and recognition. JPs also aim at developing innovative and quality oriented approaches in teaching and research, improving students' employability and making the educational offer more attractive for international students.

Over the years, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) education ministers have worked to support the development of JPs and the successive implementation of the [European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes](#), developed to enable the external quality assurance of these programmes and facilitate integrated approaches to quality assurance of joint programmes, which genuinely reflect and mirror their joint character.

In parallel, several **funding programmes** have been supported by the European Commission in order to stimulate the development of JPs. Among the most renowned is certainly the [Erasmus Mundus Programme](#), launched back in 2004.

All this has led JPs to become established formats (albeit limited in number) for European and international exchange and collaboration, giving a competitive advantage to Europe and European HEIs, with great benefits for the students and staff involved⁹.

More recently, the [European University Initiative](#) has provided new momentum, yet also new challenges, for JPs. In the European Commission's (EC) vision, European Universities are transnational alliances that will lead the way towards the universities of the future, promoting European values and identity, and revolutionising the quality and competitiveness of European higher education. To achieve this major step forward, European Universities alliances are called to offer, amongst others, "student-centred curricula jointly delivered across inter-university campuses, where diverse student bodies can build their own programmes and experience mobility at all levels of study" leading to the award of a **joint European Degree**, as well as "adopt a challenge-based approach according to which students, academics and external partners can cooperate in inter-disciplinary teams to tackle the biggest issues facing Europe today"¹⁰.

Expanding the European Universities Initiative and establishing a joint European degree are concepts that are also at the heart of the [European Strategy for Universities](#) and of the recommendations for "building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation"¹¹, proposed by the EC in January 2022. Underpinning the entire proposal is the belief that universities are critical to leading the response to big societal and global challenges through effective transnational collaboration; and that the principle of inclusive excellence across all four missions of universities makes the EU's approach distinct compared to other parts of the world.

With specific reference to joint programmes, the strategy sets the path towards the award of a **European Degree Label** by 2024. As a first step, the EC launched the European Degree Label

⁹ For detailed information on the wide range of benefits associated to JP, you can refer to the *Joint Programmes from A to Z Guide*: <https://impea.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Joint-Programmes-from-A-to-Z-Report-2020.pdf> (p. 19-20)

¹⁰ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative>

¹¹ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/proposal-for-a-council-recommendation-on-building-bridges-for-effective-european-higher-education-cooperation>

initiative, addressing alliances of HEIs and national authorities in order to examine, test and facilitate the delivery of a joint European degree label, based on common criteria. Later on, these alliances will be asked to design and deliver, at national, regional or institutional level, joint degrees based on these co-created European criteria.

National legislation around JPs

The legal power to set higher education policy and implement JP lies within the national or sub-national legislation. When developing a JP (be it with or without digital elements), it is thus important to check national regulations carefully first, especially considering the implications related to Qualification Frameworks, Accreditation, Quality Assurance, Fees and Funding, Student Admission, Legal regulations regarding the awarding of joint/double degrees. The following paragraph will outline the national legislation around JP (including key commitments to EHEA and European Approach status) in the GO-DIJIP universities partners' countries, i.e. Italy, Norway and France. For general information about current national legislation supporting JP in other EHEA countries, please refer to the [Joint Programmes from A to Z guide](#).

ITALY



National legislation: In the Italian context, joint degrees were mentioned for the first time in the [Ministerial Decree 509/1999](#), stating the possibility for universities to award joint degrees with other Italian or international universities on the basis of special agreements.

In the following years, international degrees became more and more common and the legislation on joint degrees was structured.

The [Director's Decree 2711/2021](#) «Operational guidelines for the accreditation of academic courses a.y. 2022/2023» identifies in Annex 1 three options for the accreditation of joint degrees:

- *Interateneo* courses with international universities, leading to a joint/double/multiple degree;
- Courses with structured international mobility - degree courses with one or more agreements for structured mobility leading to a double or multiple degree;
- Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters' courses, leading to a joint/double/multiple degree.

This implies that, in order to award a joint degree (and not a double/multiple degree), full accreditation of a new international programme (as '*interateneo*' course) is needed.

Key commitments to EHEA: Italy is still only partially aligned with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). A fully functioning quality assurance system is in operation nationwide but only some HEIs are subject to regular external quality assurance by an agency that has successfully demonstrated compliance with the ESG through registration on EQAR.

European Approach for Quality Assurance of JPs: is still not available to higher education institutions.

Main challenges:

- Italian HEIs cannot award joint degrees based on existing degree courses with structured international mobility, but necessarily need to accredit a new international degree course. This is considered by HEIs to be a strong hindrance to the agile development of JP in Italy.
- The non-availability of the European Approach to Italian institutions poses strong challenges for Italian HEIs, often implying double work in accrediting the programme: nationally, according

to Italian rules and at European Level if the other consortium partners follow the European Approach.

NORWAY



National legislation: in Norway, there are no legal obstacles to institutions establishing joint degrees in collaboration with other institutions. The wide joint degree definition applied in Norwegian higher education stems from the Lisbon Recognition Convention: a joint degree is a qualification awarded by at least two cooperating institutions based on a programme developed and offered jointly by the institutions. A joint degree should, as far as is legally possible, be documented in a joint diploma. Joint programmes are accredited according to the same criteria as programmes offered by one institution. The accreditation criteria are stated in the national [Regulation on supervision of the quality of education in higher education](#), whereas the [Regulation on quality assurance and quality development in higher education and vocational school education](#) contains a separate chapter on joint degrees. Both regulations are authorised in the [Act relating to universities and university colleges](#).

Key commitments to EHEA. Norway is fully aligned with the ESG. A fully functioning quality assurance system is in operation nationwide, in which all HEIs are subject to regular external quality assurance by an agency that has successfully demonstrated compliance with the ESG through registration on EQAR.

European Approach for Quality Assurance of JPs: is available to all institutions not subject to programme accreditation.

FRANCE



National legislation: Master programmes are accredited by the French National authority (HCERES) regardless of the awarding institution. In France, the Erasmus Mundus programme is explicitly mentioned as an application domain of degrees delivered within the framework of international partnerships. The issue of a joint degree is recognized as a right in France. It has to be recognized in the partner countries too, according to the agreement signed between the institutions. The diploma supplement is written in French and translated if necessary. In France, a joint degree is possible under certain circumstances:

- the Diploma is printed on the paper from the French National Printing
- the partners accept the template given by the French administration
- the Diploma is in French and in the local language/s

The detailed procedures for the development and award of French Degrees, including Joint Degrees, are stated in the [Circulaire du 24 mars 2015](#), [Bulletin officiel n°35 du 26 septembre 2019](#) and [Note de service du 23-6-2021](#)

Key commitment to EHEA: France is fully aligned with the ESG. A fully functioning quality assurance system is in operation nationwide, in which all higher education institutions are subject to regular external quality assurance by an agency that has successfully demonstrated compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) through registration on EQAR.

European Approach for Quality Assurance of JPs: could be used subject to the general conditions for recognising QA results of EQAR-registered agencies. For further info: <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/country-information/country/?id=60>

Main challenges: French HEIs cannot award joint degrees if the partner institution/s do not agree in using the French administration template and the French National Printing paper. As only French Institutions are allowed to use this paper, if French HEIs want to deliver a joint degree they must undertake the entire process of diplomas issuing.

Digitally enhanced learning and teaching (DELT)

DELT in the European Higher Education Area

Digitally enhanced learning and teaching is widely used across the EHEA, with general acceptance growing over the years and institutions widely acknowledging the benefits it brings to the student experience.

According to the EUA report “[Digitally Enhanced Learning and Teaching in European Higher Education Institutions](#)”, in Europe today, practically every HEI uses DELT. With increased take-up and resulting practical experience gained over the recent years, the controversies on the matter have been less a question of whether or not, but rather to what extent, in what mode, and what the expected impacts and benefits are. Digital learning and teaching is not only considered to be a feasible endeavour, but also a highly valuable one and a powerful change driver. In the past years, digitalisation has contributed to a major transformation in learning and teaching methods and provision, collaboration with other HEIs at national and international level, collaboration with employers and industry, outreach and provision for international students and open learning opportunities. It has also played a key role in fostering internationalisation at home, including educational practices such as virtual mobility and Virtual Exchange (VE).

The **strategic focus** placed on digitally enhanced learning and teaching has increased, undoubtedly accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, and is **reflected in many national and European policies**, with the renewed [Digital Education Action Plan \(2021-2027\)](#) underlining “the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem” as a strategic priority. Digitalisation offers opportunities to foster international academic relations through digital technologies; digitally supported information, teaching-learning and cooperation formats; it connects teachers and learners as well as researchers across borders, institutions and disciplines. Digitalisation also has an important role to play in advancing policy commitments made at EHEA and EU level, such as the automatic recognition of qualifications and common standards in quality assurance – as mentioned in the [Rome Communiqué](#) (2020); and digitally transferability of student data through the interoperability of IT infrastructures.

With specific reference to EU policies to support digitalisation, in March 2021, the Commission laid out its vision for Europe's digital transformation by 2030 in its [Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade](#) Communication. In September 2021, the Commission put forward a [Path to the Digital Decade](#), a robust governance framework to reach these digital targets.

The European Strategy for Universities (Jan 2022) mentioned above also stresses the importance of empowering universities as actors of change in the twin green and digital transitions: “the digital transition gives universities a fundamental role in equipping students and researchers with the digital skills and competences needed in the new reality and in the promotion of innovation and new technologies”.

Finally, the Commission proposed the [Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles](#) in January 2022. The Commission, Parliament and Council reached an [agreement on the Declaration](#) in November 2022. The Declaration adds to previous digital initiatives from Member States, such as the [Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment](#), the [Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-based Digital Government](#), and the [Lisbon Declaration – Digital Democracy](#) with a purpose.

With the Declaration on digital rights and principles, the EU wants to secure European values by:

- Putting people at the centre of the digital transformation;
- Supporting solidarity and inclusion through connectivity, digital education, training and skills, fair and just working conditions and access to digital public services;
- Restating the importance of freedom of choice and a fair digital environment;
- Fostering participation in the digital public space;
- Increasing safety, security and empowerment in the digital environment, in particular for young people;
- Promoting sustainability.

Concretely, these rights and principles mean: affordable and high-speed digital connectivity everywhere and for everybody, well-equipped classrooms and digitally skilled teachers, seamless access to public services online, obtaining easy-to-understand information on the environmental impact of our digital products, control about how personal data is used and with whom it is shared.

National legislation around DELT

The following paragraph will outline the national legislation around DELT in JPs in GO-DIJIP partners' countries, i.e. Italy, Norway and France.

ITALY



The [Ministerial Decree n. 289/2021](#) in Annex 4, section A - "Conventional and distance learning courses" - stated that Italian Universities may establish, at the accreditation stage, the following types of degree programmes:

- Standard degree programmes: degree programmes mostly delivered in presence. The amount of educational activities (other than practical and laboratory activities) delivered online cannot exceed 10% of the total;
- Blended degree programmes: degree programmes mostly delivered online. The amount of educational activities (other than practical and laboratory activities) delivered online cannot exceed approx. 66% of the total;
- Online degree programmes: degree programmes entirely delivered online excluding exams and thesis defences.

In late 2021, the Conference of Italian University Rectors Foundation (CRUI) lobbied for wider flexibility in legislation, in particular requesting the Ministry of Higher Education (MUR) to allow standard degree programmes to extend the limit of educational activities delivered online from 10% to 33% "in the case of courses attended virtually at other national or international universities". The Ministry denied such an extension (ref. Note n. 5152 of 22.02.2022).

Currently, there is no regulation around online or blended teaching & learning specific to JPs in place, thus standard regulation applies. However, most Italian HEIs require at least 30 ECTS (1 semester or 6 months) of study abroad within JPs.

NORWAY



It is a legislative requirement that students admitted to studies that are to be included in a JP, must be ensured a study stay of a certain extent at the partner institution(s). Hence the pre-pandemic regulations do not seem to allow for programmes where all teaching, learning and assessment take place online.

This situation may change, as digital transformation in higher education and research is high on the current political agenda. Digitalisation for flexible education is a strategic focus area including increased student mobility as a measure in the national action plan (2021 - 2025). For this purpose, opportunities to simplify and streamline processes and solutions for international student exchange are to be mapped.

FRANCE



The French Education Code states that **"The public service of higher education makes available to its users' digital educational services and resources."** (Article 123-4-1 du [code de l'éducation](#)). Above all, under the terms of article L. 611-8 (Introduced by [Law No. 2013-660 of July 22, 2013](#) on higher education and research), this same code specifies that "Higher education institutions shall make their teaching available in digital form [...]. This provision may replace the teaching provided in the presence of students in order to offer lifelong distance learning in higher education. [...] Training in the use of digital tools and resources and in understanding the issues associated with them, adapted to the specificities of the course followed by the student, is provided from the moment the student enters higher education, as a continuation of the training provided in secondary education. The classes made available in digital form by the institutions have a status equivalent to the classes given in presence [...]. At their request, teachers can attend a training course that allows them to acquire the skills necessary to make their teaching available in digital form and introduces them to innovative teaching methods involving the use of information and communication technologies".

Therefore, well before the COVID-19 pandemic, digital teaching was already an obligation of universities for courses that allowed it and the training of staff in DELT was already widely addressed by national regulations and institutional practices. Online courses could also replace face-to-face teaching to allow distance learning.

Concerning blended learning, there are no additional specific regulations, as this is considered a matter of academic and pedagogical freedom for teacher-researchers. Online and blended courses have equal status and recognition to face-to-face courses.

Currently, there is no regulation around online or blended teaching & learning specific to JPs in place, thus standard regulation applies.

Why digitalisation in joint programmes?

As demonstrated by the above developments, both the JP and DELT contexts in the EHEA are extremely dynamic and in continuous evolution.

JPs are both responses and drivers of key developments in higher education policy, thereby turning into a privileged laboratory for the testing of innovative forms of teaching, learning and international collaboration, including digital tools and methodologies. These might include: blended learning; virtual and blended mobility; Virtual Exchange; challenge-based learning to address problems in need of multinational solutions digitalised mobility administration; tools to support intercultural skills development; digital marketing; digital tools to support student engagement, etc.

The impact of Covid-19

The sudden shift to online teaching and learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak brought about various challenges for JP competences and pedagogies, teaching and learning tools, collaborative work and joint administration, as well as quality assurance. These challenges were, however, also key opportunities for JPs which, by their nature, aim to create innovative pathways and make the most of an international partnership of diverse and complementary institutions. JPs quickly tested new forms of management, welcoming international students, implementing joint teaching programmes, graduating students – showing their ability to adapt to the new situation.

Initially, all these tools were part of risk-mitigation measures and emergency-response. Slowly, however, while it became evident that digital solutions could not and should not fully replace physical activities, many of the tools and methodologies tested during the Covid-19 pandemic started to be sustainably embedded in JPs, opening up new scenarios for JP developments.

Moving beyond contingency planning: the potential of digitalisation in JP

The wave of progress in using digital technologies was forced upon HEIs by the pandemic. It will no doubt continue and intensify in the future. However, there will be choices to make and questions of cultural adaptation to address. For example, as the [Bologna Process Implementation Report 2020](#) suggests, HEIs are currently faced with key questions such as: what will be the appropriate role for digital technologies? How should the human learning and teaching environment relate to the digital environment? How can digital technologies support higher education policy objectives? Will campuses continue to exist as a main model for the organisation and delivery of higher education in a digital age? How will digital learning and teaching impact public and private funding, including student support?

When it comes to JPs, additional questions arise, e.g.: what is the right balance between physical presence and virtual mobility? How can soft skills, which are so valued by JP graduates and their employers¹², be stimulated by digital teaching & learning? To what extent can digitalisation support JPs to become more inclusive and less elitist? And how can it help JPs reduce their carbon footprint?

While the topic of digitalisation in JPs is still new and little explored in existing literature, it is starting to emerge through bottom-up experiments and innovations triggered by JP coordinators and their institutions.

In the past two years of project implementation, the GO-DIJIP team gathered many experiences, feedback, and comments from staff and students involved in JPs proving that **digitalisation can be a strong added value to JPs**. What is most interesting, is that digital environments can be embedded

¹² This has been widely explored by the REDEEM and REDEEM 2 projects: <https://www.redeemproject.eu/documents/> ; <https://www.redeem2.eu/>

in so many ways and at different levels into JPs, enriching not only the academic offer but also students' services, intercultural competences, employability and impact.

A few examples of possible ways of integrating digital environments into JPs and related benefits are summarised below and will be described in detail in the next section of the Handbook.

- **Digital tools** can be integrated into “standard” courses or activities, allowing students to experience more interaction during classes (icebreaker activities, polls...) but also outside classes (group works, research activities etc...). Digital tools can also support assessment activities, transforming exams into learning experiences using virtual open book exams.
- **Virtual and Blended Mobility and Virtual Exchange** practices are increasingly common in JPs, because they can be co-designed permitting different grades of interaction between institutions, teachers and students. They can also be very flexible (synchronous live classes, asynchronous activities to engage students in their own time, hybrid as a combination of the above) and adapted to different contexts (see chapter [Develop & innovate your programme](#)).
- **Digital tools** can be used for **management** as well as **marketing** purposes – especially social media, but also online advertisements, webinars, virtual fairs, welcoming sessions -as they allow reaching prospective students worldwide.
- **Digital environments can improve network activities**, sense of belonging and students and alumni engagement.

There are still many challenges and legal barriers to the full implementation of digitalisation in JPs (see chapter [Key challenges](#)); however, recent policy statements and strategies at EU / EHEA level suggest the **relevance of such practices to address wider policy objectives**.

The **European University Initiative**, for example, has opened the floor to further experimentation in JPs, including innovative formats, virtual and blended teaching, entirely blended JPs, etc. The **European Degree Label** criteria include an optional criteria related to digitalisation: “in addition to physical mobility, the joint programme includes additional formats of transnational learning activities with partner HEIs (e.g. online or blended, in the format of regular or intensive courses, summer/winter schools)”.

The **Bologna Implementation Report 2020** reminds us that “it is important to recognise and develop digitalisation not as an alternative to internationalisation, but rather as a facilitator of new forms of internationalisation and to simplify participation in mobility. International mobility in a digital age requires new approaches to blending different modes of learning, harnessing tools to ensure secure data exchange and developing new forms of civic engagement and identity. [...] Digital tools have a great deal of potential to reinforce both quality education and social inclusion. However, this will not happen automatically, and finding an appropriate role for digital technology will require broad thinking on a range of issues. There is an important role for strategic policy planning at both national and European levels”.

In the long-term, it is hoped that digital settings can facilitate a more **equal and inclusive access to JPs**, providing the opportunity to attend a JP completely or partially online. This opportunity is particularly relevant in the context of JPs, which are still very niche programmes because of the high costs for travelling and leaving abroad and because of visa issues that may humper some students from attending the programme in presence.

Once again, JPs – and all the people working behind these programmes (from academics, to administrators, students and policy makers) – have a big role to play in advancing towards renewed Bologna objectives (ref. Rome Communiqué 2020) contributing to an **inclusive, innovative and interconnected higher education**. Digital tools, in its many declinations, can strongly support such



a process. At the same time, as the JPROV project¹³ points out, they can help in responding to some major threats that JPs currently face, e.g. geo political turmoil; environmental concerns (travel); changes in tuition fee policies; legal obstacles, etc.

The next section of the Handbook will guide you to make the best use of digital tools in JP, based on your programme needs and expectations.

¹³ <https://wpmu-bis.sys.kth.se/jprov/>



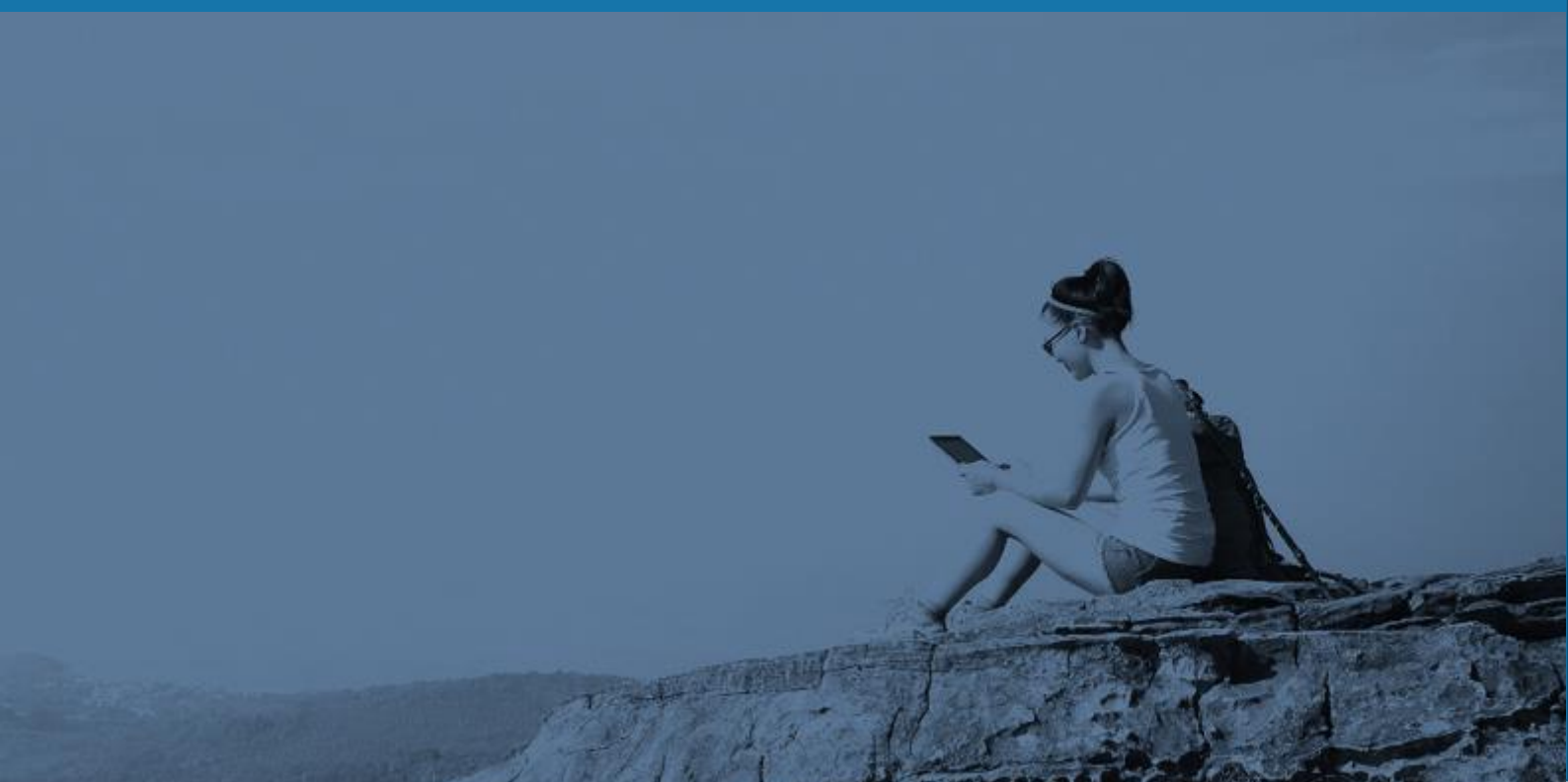
Integrating Digital
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HANDBOOK and POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

PART 2

Integrating digital elements into Joint Programmes

A guide for practitioners



Develop & innovate your programme

This section presents possible ways of **integrating digitally enhanced teaching and learning into JP development**. It will explore different levels of integration, from promoting the use of digital tools and innovative pedagogies in 'traditional JPs' up to developing fully blended JPs.

Blended Learning is a model combining face-to-face classroom teaching and the innovative use of ICT technologies. As often remarked, blended learning may include a broad range of different approaches that may differ considerably between institutions and disciplines. Levels of sophistication may also differ, regarding learning design and its underlying pedagogical approaches, ranging from recorded lectures providing flexibility for students, and teachers, to a thoroughly designed curriculum, balancing not only physical and virtual presence, but also synchronous and asynchronous work, with aligned assessments. As technologies improve and become more accessible, and institutional experience and capacity is growing and more widespread, this is likely to generate new and more differentiated formats and concepts.

Integrating blended learning in traditional JPs

Below are some examples of possible integrations of blended learning into 'traditional JPs' (i.e. JPs with physical mobility involved). In these cases, academics would not need to design a fully new JP but they can innovate an existing JP with some smaller changes and integrations.

Digital tools for teaching & learning

Many tools are available to make teaching more fluid and efficient when a blended learning approach is desired. They help learners achieve the learning objectives set by teachers and stimulate the interaction within students and between students and teachers. In order for digital tools to be effective, it is essential that they:

- are integrated in a reasoned and appropriate way into the course plan
- are sufficiently mastered by both academics and students
- represent an added value to the course and allow for a student-centred learning environment, facilitating interaction and collaboration.

Moreover, remember that for online learning to be successful and enjoyable, participants need to be supported through a structured developmental process. Several models and methodologies, such as Gilly Salmon's 5 stage model, can be found in the [GO-DIJIP training resources](#) and can support you in using digital tools in your JP.

You can find a list of available digital tools for teaching&learning that can be used in JPs, along with a set of recommendations and 'golden rules' for their usage, in the [JPROV Toolbox](#). They have also been mapped and analysed by other Erasmus+ projects & initiatives, including the [DigiFoodEdu](#) project, in which APT is a partner.

Another interesting practice explored by some GO-DIJIP partners is the use of digital tools for **training and lab activities** using digital platforms able to create an **immersive environment** through 360° media and a VR headset (ex: [UpTale](#) a platform to design, distribute, monitor and manage training modules in 360° and virtual reality). Immersive modules allow to design fully virtual training course or can be used only in a very first phase of the training i.e. for safety onboarding. Immersing students/trainees in a virtual immersive environment allows them to be exposed to the lab environment/workstation and can be used as a preparatory module (e.g. for the explanation of

safety protocols) but also to simulate dangerous situations/errors and demonstrate how to deal with and solve them in a safe environment.

Pros: easy to integrate, provided that academic staff is adequately trained to integrate the innovative use of ICT technologies in their courses.

Cons: multiplying platforms and tools may lead to students cognitive overload so it is very important to design a digital strategy that envisages the use of a set of digital tools designed to meet the different teaching needs while avoiding each teacher using different tools for the same purposes.

Case studies: [GO-DIJIP Video Testimonials](#)

MOOCs and iOOCs

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are courses delivered online. The focus of these is primarily on content delivery - they are mostly based on recorded video lectures and learning materials. Interactive Open Online Courses (iOOCs) combine content presented in a similar format to MOOCs, with an interactive component which includes weekly synchronous discussion sessions in small groups with the support of a dialogue facilitator.

Pros: MOOC is easy to integrate if it's already available; if the MOOC is open to external participants, it could also serve as a good marketing tool for the entire JP. iOOCs stimulates interaction and intercultural communication. If iOOCs are open to students from other institutions, they encourage the exchange between students from different fields, countries, etc.

Cons: although many MOOCs have a forum component and encourage students to interact, the interaction is not sustained and is optional. iOOCs might be more difficult to develop and/or take more time, unless the JP would like to opt for ready-made iOOCs offered by external organisations.

Virtual Mobility

Virtual Mobility refers to students and academics who study or teach for a short period at another institution outside their own country, without physically leaving their home. JPs can integrate virtual mobility of both students and academics in their curricula, by e.g. (1) including one course, intensive programme, summer/winter school, or one full semester entirely taught online by one of the partner institutions (students would thus stay in their home institution or in another consortium institution of their choice while attending online courses). (2) involving visiting professors from other institutions (part or not part of the consortium) through online participation.

Pros: it limits physical travel, thereby being potentially more inclusive and environmentally friendly. It offers students the possibility to experience learning / teaching approaches from different institutions (even if not physically moving to that institution). In JPs it is often used for joint intensive programmes. Finally, it does not necessarily require a pre-existing agreement between institutions (e.g. students from a JP could attend online courses offered by another institution outside the consortium - without pre-existing agreements - if this is considered to add value to the programme).

Cons: student-to-student interaction is limited; intercultural communication and experience is not directly stimulated, unless interactive activities, online dialogue, etc are facilitated (using e.g. the Virtual Exchange methodology mentioned below).

Case studies: [On-line pre master foundation programme at the University of L'Aquila](#); [FIPDes on-line pre-Master courses in intercultural communication and local language](#)

Virtual Exchange projects¹⁴

Virtual Exchange (VE) is a practice that consists of sustained, technology-enabled, people-to-people online exchange sessions in which constructive communication and interaction take place with the support of educators or facilitators. VE projects are educational programmes that include:

- an element of collaboration and exchange between participants
- a focus not only on content learning, but also on the development of transversal skills
- intended learning objectives like intercultural communication and digital literacies

VE may take different forms, more specifically it can be either a **ready-made** or a **teacher-designed programmes**. In ready-made programmes, pedagogical experts from external educational providers have developed Virtual Exchanges which other institutions can join. These programmes are distinguished from other forms of online education by the online synchronous exchanges between students led by trained facilitators. During weekly 'live' sessions, the students meet in small groups to discuss different topics - often around global issues - with peers from a variety of geographical and cultural backgrounds and engage in interactive tasks and collaborative assignments. The advantage of this type of VE is the limited time investment for the institution, as the VE has been carefully planned and designed by professional providers in the field, thus ensuring high quality.

In Teacher-designed projects, educators in HEIs develop a project with one or more partners in a different country/various countries, to integrate a more international and intercultural perspective into their courses, thus maintaining full control over the contents and duration of the programme. The VE can be developed in any discipline and subject area, and can be transdisciplinary. This enables the students and teachers to acquire different perspectives on their subject while learning to collaborate with their international peers through the use of ICT. Synchronous online sessions ensure discussion among peers with the help of qualified facilitators. This kind of VE will of course require higher time investment for the institution, especially in the very initial setup stage.

What is interesting about VE is that it can be used in multiple ways which offer great potential for JPs. Indeed, VE focuses on interaction between participants, inclusive and intercultural collaboration, dialogue and mutual understanding, which are all central aspects for JPs. The VE methodology has proven to work as a synergistic and complementary component of physical exchange programmes, showing that it can prepare, deepen, and extend physical exchanges.

Looking at potential VE scenarios available for HEIs¹⁵, possible ways of integrating VEs in JPs include:

- **Virtual Exchange as a preparatory or follow-up activity to physical mobility.** VE can offer high quality preparation for physical mobility, ensuring that students make the most of their stay abroad and reflect on their international experience. It could be offered before the start of the JP, focusing on language & intercultural communication. Alternatively, it could be offered as an [Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme](#) (thereby also potentially benefiting from dedicated funding).
- **Virtual Exchange as an intertwined component of physical mobility.** In this case, the VE activities are intrinsically linked with the physical mobility experience in a single educational experience, as a part of a specific initiative (for example a winter or summer school, a final conference, or also - but not necessarily - while students are abroad). In JPs it could help diversify the student body participating in a physical mobility exchange, by including students who are unable to travel for longer periods of time.

¹⁴ The following paragraph is adapted from the *FRAMES Toolkit for Integrating Virtual Exchange in Higher Education*, p. 9-19. <https://frames-project.eu/outputs/toolkit/>

¹⁵ For further reference, see the Scenarios for the integration of Virtual Exchange in Higher Education. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5573614>

- **Virtual Exchange as a component of a course.** This type of VE is used to support the course learning objectives and to give an international dimension to the course. By doing so, it could help ensure joint elements for the JP (joint teaching and learning) and interaction between students studying at different partner universities of the JP (if the cohort is not moving all together).

For detailed information on how to integrate VE in your curriculum, please refer to the [FRAMES Toolkit](#).

Pros: VE can offer a more inclusive approach to internationalisation by allowing students who would not take part in a (long-term) physical mobility programme the opportunity to have an international experience as part of their university studies, and acquire essential transversal skills, such as the ability to work in culturally diverse settings. It can therefore be considered a complementary component of a physical mobility exchange. Moreover, VE fits very well in the context of wider projects/networks which can design an educational component specifically suited to their needs in the long term.

Cons: VE has proven to be successful in innovating the educational experience of students in various settings. However, its success is strictly linked to careful planning since the very beginning, so as to overcome major challenges such as accreditation or sustainability. Sustainability of VE, especially when the VE is combined with a physical mobility as a preparation or intertwined component of the mobility, heavily depends on the willingness and ability of the participating institutions to invest in the project with staff hours and - in some cases - the hosting of the physical mobility. Lack of resources and funding to implement the physical mobility component can therefore hinder the implementation of a VE activity.

Case study: [Preparing students for a physical mobility through Virtual Exchange e-Tandem at the University of Padua](#)

Developing new blended JPs

As described above, blended learning can be integrated in multiple ways in existing and/or 'traditional' JPs. However, it can also be a core component of new JPs, leading to the development of fully blended study programmes.

HEIs' experience in this regard is still very limited, with only a few examples of such innovative programmes being developed within European University Alliances or new Erasmus Mundus Masters. There is, however, potential for growth of blended JPs, considering important social and economic factors such as inclusion, environmental sustainability, finances and costs, etc. Below you can find some possible examples & scenarios of blended joint programmes proposed both by the GO-DIJIP and JPROV projects.

Staff mobility instead of student mobility

Such a model favours staff mobility for 1 or 2 semesters, instead of student mobility. Students thus stay at their 'home institutions' but can benefit from classes offered by academics from different institutions from the consortium.

Pros: it doesn't require physical travel for students, thereby it's more inclusive and environmentally friendly. It offers students the possibility to experience teaching approaches from different institutions even if not physically moving to that institution, thus also contributing to 'internationalisation at home'.

Cons: students-teacher interaction may be limited if not adequately stimulated.

Embedded Virtual Mobility: see [Virtual Mobility](#) paragraph.

Embedded Virtual Exchange throughout the duration of the programme

Students attend lectures (face-to-face) in one of the consortium universities and connect to the other campuses online throughout the degree programme duration. Group work and interaction between students is a key element for the entire duration of the programme.

Pros: it allows a high level of interaction between students physically located at different HEIs, maintaining team spirit among them.

Cons: it might be difficult to develop as it requires a high level of organisation and integration between partners universities to be successfully implemented. Moreover students only have a limited intercultural experience (with no direct experience of the foreign country/city/language/culture).

Hybrid JP

This model allows students to follow the programme both fully locally (following online classes offered by other institutions part of the consortium) and following a mobility track between two or more different study places.

Pros: It ensures full access to students that cannot be mobile for different reasons, while at the same time guaranteeing the physical mobility experience to those who would like to experience it.

Cons: imply the delivery of all courses in a hybrid mode in order for the courses to be available for both students in presence and on-line.

Case study for the above scenarios: [The CHARM-EU joint masters in Global Challenges for sustainability: a description of digital interactions in teaching and learning](#)

Below are two further scenarios analysed by the JPROV project in its [Toolbox](#).

JOINT PROGRAMMES with no physical mobility

- A) **JP with residence at one university only:** two degree-issuing universities could offer a joint programme with residence at only one university plus a virtual mobility only at another university. No interaction between students from different institutions is foreseen.



Figure 1 JP with residence at one university only

- B) **Entirely online JP:** two degree-issuing universities offer a fully online JP (one year of virtual mobility at one university plus one year of virtual mobility at another university). No interaction between students from different institutions is foreseen.

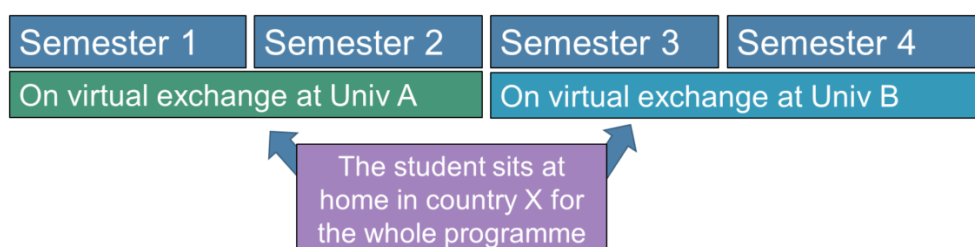


Figure 2 Entirely online JP

Lessons learnt and key recommendations



Surveys carried out among teachers, students, and staff reveal an essential element: distance learning needs to be made more explicit in terms of learning outcomes, work instructions, methodological approaches, etc. A formalisation of these elements through written guidelines and /or videos (explaining how to use the available digital tools, and practical and pedagogical recommendations...) is needed to frame and inform teachers and students before the course starts. This is particularly relevant when it comes to JPs, as students are exposed to different teaching environments (being the “nature” of JPs of being delivered by two or more institutions). If students have to use multiple digital tools offered by the various institutions of the consortium the risk is for them to feel overwhelmed and not motivated.

It is therefore very important to provide students and teachers with clear instructions and guidelines and to give room for reflection: group works, peer reviews, tutoring, surveys with room for comments, office hours.

Dos

- give clear instructions
- carefully select the most appropriate digital tool according to the teaching activity
- use immersive tools (e. g. virtual tour of a laboratory, a museum ...)
- build short sessions punctuated by reflective breaks (where the work can be done independently)
- alternating phases of group work with one-on-one or solo moments
- find time to check what happens outside the academic field
- keep blended activities while in face to face
- be interactive
- archiving every document between versions as we build the project
- testing equipment and apps before the course

Donts

- too many students in the same group
- too long sessions
- having too much workload
- avoid preserving social links between students
- multiplying platforms and tools (risk of students cognitive overload!)
- organise synchronous sessions without taking into account the time difference

Main stakeholders



When integrating digital elements into JPs and/or when developing new blended JPs, it is essential to get in touch and collaborate with different offices at your institutions in order to both support academics in the process, and guide students through a new academic setting. Key stakeholders to be involved may include:

- Academic Affairs / Teaching Development Office
- Quality assurance office
- Digital Learning / Teaching Support Centre
- International Relations Office
- IT services

Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance Offices play a key role when designing a new programme (including a blended JP), making sure that institutional and national requirements are met. International Relations offices are usually responsible for overseeing the negotiations of international partnership agreements, including JP agreements, and can also support you in finding possible sources of funding (internal & external) for your JP. Digital Learning / Teaching Support Centres, on their hand, can ensure that they new programme is innovative and forward-looking: digitalization is about supporting the development of students and academics and guide them according to their roles, needs and ability to move into some challenging areas such as: students' learning autonomy, teachers' pedagogical adaptability, teaching and learning situations based on the nex technologies, etc. An important figure in these transformations is the pedagogical engineer (also referred to as 'instructional designer') who guides teachers in the creation of innovative pedagogical scenarios and devices. Finally, consider involving IT staff: they will be invaluable in defining equipment requirements, anticipating the difficulties associated with the security systems of the institutions, making users aware of the rules for using data and helping them to find a technical solution even at the most difficult times.

As it is clear from the previous paragraphs, the development of JPs is a complex and collective process, requiring collaboration and input by different stakeholders. Failure to do so could result in not respecting institutional/national requirements, lack of accreditation, poor quality of the programme, poor student satisfaction, etc. Remember that your students are the first ambassadors of your programme and the quality of JPs is key!

Resources



Below you can find a compilation of useful tools and resources to support your JP development:

- **GO-DIJIP Amplifier Platform:** developed by the GO-DIJIP project, Amplifier is a blog set up to share practical examples collected among JP coordinators, students, administrators of how digital interaction is introduced in a variety of JPs and courses. <https://amplifier.w.uib.no/go-dijip/>
- **GO-DIJIP Virtual Staff Training Course:** <https://www.unipd.it/en/online-staff-training-course-go-dijip>
- **JPROV Digital Toolbox:** collection of useful digital tools for JPs put together by the JPROV project: <https://learningtoolbox.aalto.fi/build-your-digital-course/>
- **FRAMES Toolkit for Integrating Virtual Exchange in Higher Education.** It provides key information, inspiration, tools and case examples of the approaches that HEIs can take to integrate and accredit VE. <https://frames-project.eu/outputs/toolkit/>
- **Joint Programmes from A to Z A reference guide for practitioners.** The aim of the guide is to provide an updated and integrated practical reference guide for practitioners on all aspects that need to be taken into account when developing and managing joint programmes with one or more partners in another country. The guide is relevant for all joint programmes, whether or not they are funded by Erasmus Mundus. The main focus is on bachelor and master levels, since joint doctoral programmes are less structured.
<https://impea.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Joint-Programmes-from-A-to-Z-Report-2020.pdf>

Market your programme

After having designed and structured a Joint programme, how can you effectively promote it in order to attract valuable applicants?

Generally, promoting a product implies the development of a marketing strategy. JPs need to be promoted in order to be successful and attract excellent students. Most JP are aimed at an international audience and consequently JP consortia face a rising competition in the global education market to attract talented students.

Designing marketing strategies is particularly complex and its implementation requires human and financial resources. JPs might have a budget allocated for marketing activities (as in the case of some Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes): then it is possible to pay a consultant or hire a marketing expert and design a proper marketing strategy using on-line portals, educational consultants, international fairs, etc. Often, however, JPs have limited financial resources and the project manager (if any) or even the academic coordinator is expected to perform marketing activities. In this scenario, it is fundamental to change the perspective, shifting from the concept of marketing strategies - that need many human and financial resources in order to be developed and implemented - to the concept of *marketing by strategy*.

Marketing by strategy

The value proposition

How to stand out in a crowded HE market? **Marketing BY strategy** means marketing strategically and marketing strategically a JP is essential to keep the focus on the '**product**' - the JP itself - before considering the tools to reach out a specific audience.

JPs are, by definition, jointly delivered by two or more international HEIs and this is already an added value compared to "traditional" programmes - not jointly delivered. The jointness is at the foundation of any JP and precisely this jointness is key to design the value proposition of a JP. How this jointness is declined and how the collaboration and partnerships are conceived affect the **value proposition** of the programme.

The partnership is, usually, what is more valuable for a JP. With this respect, it is essential to communicate the **additional value** of that specific partnership in terms of pedagogical outputs, student experience, employability opportunities, etc. Answering the following questions might help in defining the value proposition of a JP:

- Which are the peculiar features of your programme? How is it 'unique'?
- Which is the added value delivered by your partnership? *i.e. complementarity of the educational offers, international perspective, partnership's prestige, partnership's scientific collaboration, professional orientation...*
- How will attending the programme improve the students' knowledge and their career opportunities?

Securing value, a valuable programme and a valuable student experience is key for an effective promotion of JPs. Nevertheless, the beneficiary of this experience and the tools to reach out its beneficiaries are similarly key for a successful promotion.

The audience

The proposition value must also be defined in function of a specific **target audience**. Who are we creating value for? This is an incredibly important question. An excellent JP, outstanding partners and a well conceived proposition value are not useful if there is not anyone who is potentially interested in this JP. With this respect, it is important to understand that a JP's audience is multidimensional. On one side, the programme must be disciplinarily appealing. It can be a niche programme or a mainstream programme, but in the end it must have its own audience in certain countries, with a specific age, background, interests, etc. Useful recommendations for target group definitions can be found in the [Guide to Developing International Student Personas](#) by Studyportals.

Any effort to promote a JP must take into consideration the features of its audience. But besides the 'physical' features of the audience, it is important to understand that the process of attracting students requires different actions in different stages of the process. In other words, the audience is changing across time and specific actions are required to make the audience do the next move towards the enrolment in a JP.

Digital Marketing: design your tools in function of your audience

As already mentioned, the audience is changing across time. Consequently, different initiatives to promote a JP can have different purposes in different moments. A JP needs to be visible, positively evaluated, encouraging the submission of an application and the eventual acceptance of an admission offer. The table below presents different digital tools that can be used during the typical journey of an applicant.



NOT DEFINED	Website/webpage	User-oriented application process		
	Thematic Online Portals			
	Social Media Adv	Webinar/Open Day	CRM	Social Media Contents
	Google Adv	Brochures		
	Educational Fairs	Landing Pages		
		Social Media Contents		

Figure 3 Digital and hybrid tools for Marketing purposes

A JP must be visible

A JP can be visible to prospective students with different tools.

The **Website** is still the main shop window of any JP and it is surfed by both internal and external prospective students, regardless of whether the JP has a dedicated website or only a web page within the partner universities website. A good website must be mobile-responsive and allow interested visitors to move from the home page to the applications' page in maximum three clicks.

In addition, if the JP target audience are international students, you should consider investing some budget to promote it via other channels with an international outreach.

Thematic online portals are online platforms particularly effective in enabling prospective students to search for HE options from institutions around the world. The costs may vary a lot (from a few hundred Euros/year to thousands Euros/year for the most important portals).

Similarly, **social media adv/Google adv** such as paid ads/messages/videos on social media platforms (e.g., FB, Twitter, YouTube) can be helpful to reach out to prospective students.

Finally yet importantly, **educational fairs** - organised by many providers worldwide - are effective to foster the meeting with prospective students. The students participating in these fairs have been usually pre-screened by the organiser based on their interest in your area of study/level of study. Fairs are run by either public or private organisers and attendance fees can vary consistently. Participation in these fairs may, however, be difficult for JP with a low budget.

A JP must be appealing to its audience

Besides being visible, a JP must attract students either by having a simple application process or by presenting itself effectively and convincingly.

A **user-oriented application process** is per se very supportive in attracting students. Prospective students should be able to create an online personal area within the JP application platform. In this personal area the application process should be displayed step-by-step, allowing prospects to pass to the further step only once the previous one has been satisfied. Students-coordinator communication might also be managed within the personal area, as well as the whole evaluation process. Nevertheless, how a JP is presenting itself to its audience is even more important, thus a simple, easy-to-navigate, and user-friendly programme website is key for later success.

Webinar/Open Days can be organised both *in loco* (for internal audience) or online - as webinar - for international prospects. They are usually very appreciated by prospective students as they give the chance to meet JP professors and get a deeper insight on the main academic features of the programme. Alumni and current students may also be involved to share their experiences and act as testimonials. The administrative staff can also answer questions on the application procedure.

More traditional **brochures** can show the information prospective students actively look for, such as entry requirements, scholarships available, rankings, how to apply and relative deadlines. They can be downloaded directly from the JP website. Social media contents showcased via Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok or LinkedIn are particularly effective to give students a sense of what the JP is about or of what is taught or of what students will experience.

Social media contents might include informative content, infographics, live video, and events. They play a big part in the decision-making process of many prospects, especially when it comes to enrol in a JP, when prospective students need to be engaged. Being appealing is key when a student is evaluating the programme, when a student is considering applying for a programme and finally when a student is deciding to accept an eventual admission offer. Keep social media alive, updated, and relevant for prospective students may be challenging and very time-consuming if a

communication manager is not in place. For this, current students and alumni can be a great asset, as explained in the chapter [Engage your students](#).

Case study: [Social networks management for sustainable territorial development and climate change adaptation](#)

The contents

Digital tools should present contents relevant to the JP's prospective students. The JP can present its or its proposition value, but its biggest asset in showcasing its qualities is represented by its students or alumni.

In most cases, JPs require at least one compulsory mobility abroad, often more. Therefore, the decision of attending a JP normally implies choosing not only an academic specialisation, but also a lifestyle, and it is perceived as a deeply personal decision. Potential students want to feel that they can envision themselves studying – and even living – in the partner institutions for a period. Providing students with clear information on mobility arrangements, administrative procedures, support services offered by partners etc. is certainly important, but is it enough?

Often, faced with the mass of information, prospective students may feel disoriented and even frightened. For this, peer feedback is core. Students trust students and they are looking for proof that the created expectations will be matched.

In this scenario, the **most valuable resources are the stories of the current JP students or alumni**. Successful alumni are the best proof that the degree obtained is paying off as far as the entrance in the job market is concerned. Hence, asking successful alumni to play the testimonial role when presenting the academic offer abroad can be a winning move. They can be easily engaged as Ambassadors and their stories can be spread all over the world thanks to social media, websites, on-line platforms etc...

Go to the next chapter [Engage your students](#) for some hints about how to effectively engage your students and alumni and/or make the most from existing students and alumni associations.

Lessons learnt & key recommendations



- The best marketers are those ones selling a good product.
- The EXTERNAL market is BIG; do not waste money to reach people that you cannot reach.
- The INTERNAL market is SMALL; do not create programmes for students who are not there.

Main stakeholders

When promoting a JP, the Coordinator or the Project manager can interact and rely on the following stakeholders:



- Marketing & Communication Offices/Divisions
- IROs
- External service providers
- Academic Staff
- Students/Alumni

Either performing promotional activities or acting as testimonials, they can all provide a valuable contribution to successfully promote a JP.

Resources



Below you can find a compilation of useful tools and resources to support you in marketing JP:

- **GO-DIJIP Amplifier Platform:** <https://amplifier.w.uib.no/category/admin-home/>
- **88 Ways to recruit international students.** The aim of the guide is to provide a compendium of international student recruitment techniques elaborated by Intead. It makes reference to the US market, but the tactics, services and tools can all be used in any region around the world.
https://unicollaborationtraining.org/pluginfile.php/24960/mod_resource/content/5/88%20ways%20to%20recruit%20students.pdf
- **EAIE Blog on marketing & recruitment:** <https://www.eaie.org/blog/category/marketing-recruitment.html>
- **Digital Marketing Solutions for Education Institutions.** The 2023 edition of the HEM eBook would help HEIs navigating the world of education marketing, providing relevant insights and practical tools to advance current and digital student recruitment strategy.
https://381672.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/381672/HEM%20LPs/eBooks/HEM_eBook_2023.pdf?__hstc=104785823.b4807e2c7dd45511cb0cd36aa5adfb04.1675158132043.1675158132043.1675158132043.1&__hssc=104785823.3.1675158132043&__hsfp=1257453241&hsCtaTracking=853c4ca8-2d99-4c65-a08f-0469ff43d5aa%7C93a35f95-1eb5-469a-94f8-77166e56ee75
- **Guide to Developing International Student Personas.** The aim of the guide developed by Studyportals is to help revisiting the student persona, which lays the foundation for the majority of the marketing activities: from targeting to messaging to value proposition.
<https://studyportals.com/student-recruitment/international-student-persona-canvas/>

Engage your students

Engaging students and keeping them engaged with their programme will enhance everyone's experience, including the students, faculty as well as other staff involved in the programme. Engagement can be manifold, and often generating a sense of belonging can support the learning and overall experience of students. The following sessions will explore student engagement, its benefits on a global level and give ideas on how to initially engage and keep students engaged throughout and beyond their JP experience, considering the nature of a JP and keeping in mind mobility and other activities.

Rely on students

Engaging with students contributes highly to establish a safe and secure working environment. This allows students to learn and contribute and is specifically important in JPs which are often attended by very international groups of students and imply (in most cases) moving location and university throughout the programme. It should be kept in mind that engagement can happen at many levels, e.g. during the formal teaching activities, but also outside in a structured way, moving on to potentially self-organised student activities. These activities can, depending on the course setup, be physical, virtual or if needed hybrid.

Before addressing potential tools and suggestions, it shall be highlighted that dialogue is key to gauge the need and interest to engage students (pro-) actively. To do so, experience shows that relying on students themselves to identify the need to engage and explore possible engagement opportunities is key. On a higher level, University level surveys can be used to capture student's impressions and needs. More, JP specific internal surveys could be used, an open suggestion channel and/or engaging regularly with all students and/or a (elected) student representative.

Depending on the need and interest of engagement, this can be driven by different involved stakeholders. In many university environments, ongoing activities can be used and passed on to students, and course internal activities can be thought of. The latter can be organised either by the course leadership and/or by JP students themselves. By doing so students are being empowered to contribute to their own (JP) success story. Higher level structures can also be used for engagement, e.g., student and/or alumni associations, amongst others.

Creativity can enhance the engagement experience, which apart from physical can also be reflected online, e.g., via social media channels.

Digital Tools to promote students/alumni engagement

Tools can be manifold and include people as well as activity suggestions. As indicated previously, the JPs students are a great asset to rely and count on. Activities leading to engagement can either involve your students and/or be led by them.

A powerful tool for engagement is **community building**, which can be achieved e.g., on an individual basis, or involving a student group.

An example for a more individual approach can be a **mentoring or buddy programme**. Living the experience of a JP can be challenging. Establishing direct links amongst peers, e.g. 1st and 2nd year students, allows them to easily answer questions and give support where and when it is most needed. Creating a group of mentors composed by current (more senior) students or alumni who

are available to new students is enriching at all levels. It could even be considered to have students self-organise the mentoring programme. The lead of the group might be motivated by developing leadership skills which are necessary for career development

Supporting and incentivising students to explore and engage in, not per se directly course related topics, can foster strong engagement and importantly also keeps students engaged. The following are projects which have shown to work successfully, leading to student engagement, and hence, a higher commitment to their JP.

- **Local get togethers**, e.g., including board game afternoons or cultural excursions (walks, theatre visits, ...)
- Creating fun activities in order to increase the feeling of belonging.
- A **Cookbook** is a nice initiative, students can contribute with a recipe from their country (of origin) or a country they feel attached to. Students will love to see their recipe published in a book (or blogpost if that proves to be easier) that is accessible to many people. They will also feel proud about it and will distribute it among people they know.
- Creating a **Podcast** in which students talk about specific topics (these can be course related or more general/personal) required great teamwork. This activity increases the feeling of belonging since students are able to share testimonies which they might not have been able to share in the course context. Many inspiring stories can be the result of the activity which requires a number of different expertises.
- **Blog posts** or **social media take-overs** do not only empower your students to feel as an integral part of the course. Furthermore, such activities are one of the best ways to promote your course. The student's message is better received by prospective students and best suited to share their experience, including benefits and challenges of a course.
- Organising **informative sessions** from time to time in which your alumni share their experience will attract the attention of your audience in a good way. This is also a great way to show your alumni how you value them. Keeping engaged with them will also show your current students how you care and create a growing community amongst peers, allowing for exchange, and growing personal networks.
- **Joint event organisation**, e.g., a career fair, webinar series allows to engage with the local/Jp community but also beyond.
- To engage and open up engagement towards the post-Jp time **promotion of success stories** can be leveraged. This can serve to highlight how students have had great success in their career. This can be illustrated by e.g., showcasing their career path, and hence inspiring and motivating others (e.g., current and prospective students).

Overall, all the above-mentioned activities also give your students an opportunity for **professional development**, including public speaking, organisation, (project) management, use their energy and interest to together create engagement and keep it up.

Lessons learnt & key recommendations



Tackling and addressing engagement can seem daunting at first. Nevertheless, there is a lot of potential within. Trust your students to keep engaged and help them, if needed to think of engagement opportunities (see [Digital Tools to promote students/alumni engagement](#)). Students want to give back and belong – enhancing their learning experience.

It can be guaranteed that the time they invest into activities will be very well returned and also increase their learning experience and results.

Last but not least, we encourage you to **think outside the box**. It must not always be “you” carrying the burden to engage – engage with one and empower them to engage further/keep up momentum. Don't get stuck and trust your uniqueness to be able to engage and keep up the engagement. Incentivise, you will find the right students who are interested in and willing to contribute.

Main stakeholders



When it comes to engagement of students the main stakeholders are students, as well as alumni, potential future students as well as the university staff, including teaching and support staff.

Additionally, University structures, such as the international office, students support, or alumni association can contribute to fostering a sense of belonging. Local structures, amongst others, can be e.g., a student union and/or the University's Alumni Association (if it exists).

On a higher level, and specifically considering mobility and JPs the following might be of interest and can support and serve, both the course itself, as well as the individual students during their JP journey. Under the umbrella of the European Student Alumni Associations umbrella – [ESAA](#) the following organisations exist:

- Erasmus Mundus Student and Alumni Association [EMA](#),
- Erasmus Student Network ([ESN](#)),
- [garagErasmus](#),
- [OCEANS network](#)

Additionally, regional groups, such as:

- Western Balkans Alumni Association ([WBAA](#))
- African Students and Alumni Forum ([ASAF](#))

Resources



- GO-DIJIP Amplifier Platform: <https://amplifier.w.uib.no/category/admin-home/>
- EAIE Blog on marketing & recruitment:
<https://www.eaie.org/blog/category/marketing-recruitment.html>

DO IT YOURSELF!

Access GO-DIJIP training resources

The GO-DIJIP project has developed a comprehensive training course on how to best integrate digital tools in JP. **The course resources can be accessed for free at the following link:** <https://www.unipd.it/en/online-staff-training-course-go-dijip>

Course description

The course is designed for those who are interested in exploring how to successfully integrate digital environments and innovative pedagogies within JPs at their institutions. Participants develop an understanding of what VE entails, and of how a virtual dimension that focuses on intercultural learning and transversal skills can be successfully integrated into JPs. Participants gain experience in, and are asked to reflect upon, digital literacies through communicating and collaborating online via synchronous and asynchronous means, thereby getting a taste of VE with international colleagues first-hand. Finally, participants are encouraged to bring their own experiences into the training and work on potential opportunities for innovating their JPs at their institutions.

There are 5 Modules in the course, including a final module devoted to an overall discussion and deepening of topics dealt with in the previous modules:

- **BROADEN your digital skills** (led by the University of Bergen): virtual as an opportunity to re-design JPs (week 1)
- **EXPLORE innovative learning & teaching methodologies** (led by UNICollaboration): an introduction to VE (week 2)
- **MARKET JPs using digital tools** (led by the University of Padua and EMA): promoting JPs strategically and digitally (week 3)
- **INNOVATE your JP integrating digital environments** (led by AgroParisTech): good practice examples from EMJMDs (week 4)
- **WHAT will I bring back home?** (led by all partners): a reflection of what participants have learnt in the previous weeks (week 5)

Learning outcomes

By taking this course, participants:

- Understand how to organise online teaching, learning and cooperation according to acknowledged and reputable models.
- Are able to adapt their practices to online contexts by applying core learning design principles
- Understand how virtual collaborative opportunities can fit into JP activities/courses
- Understand how to organise the work so to design and cooperate efficiently with partners
- Understand the value of Intercultural Competences for JP students
- Understand how knowledge and skills can complement each other
- Understand the importance for JP students of being able to work in a virtual multidisciplinary and intercultural setting
- Understand how to strategically promote JPs using digital tools

Find out more about GO-DIJIP and the Virtual Staff Training Course by watching [this video](#)

HANDBOOK and POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

PART 3

Main challenges and key policy recommendations *about*

the digitalisation of Joint Programmes



Key challenges

Joint Programmes

As mentioned in previous sections of the Handbook, the European Strategy for Universities (18th January 2022) and the Council Recommendation adopted on 5th April 2022 make clear reference to the need to eliminate barriers to the development of JPs, and in particular of joint degrees, in order to advance in the transformation of the European university system.

Despite the repeated commitments at successive inter-ministerial conferences to eliminate barriers, the shared adoption of the European Standards and Guidelines, or the setting up in 2015 of the European Approach to the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, there are still daunting challenges posed by the implementation of JPs in many EU and EHEA countries.

These obstacles exist at institutional, regional, national and European level, and are of diverse nature: regulatory, cultural, financial, and social. Major barriers identified by the GO-DIJIP consortium (including the European Alliances which GO-DIJIP institutions are part of) are:

- Major divergence in quality assurance procedures between national contexts (institutional accreditation versus programme accreditation; ex ante versus ex post accreditation; major differences in the need for re-accreditation following programme changes or new partners; diverse time scales for validity of accreditation), leading at times to the need to accredit the same programme several times;
- Some national contexts have no QAA registered with EQAR;
- Some national contexts oblige universities to only use national QAAs;
- Major divergence in complex bureaucratic procedures for the approval and implementation of new programmes (internal institutional QA systems, QAAs, authorisation from different regional and national authorities), procedures often taking up to two full years before a programme can be advertised to potential students;
- Divergent national legislation on the length of study programmes (e.g. Spain where national EQF6 programmes are 240 ECTS, with the only exception of programmes developed within EU Alliances);
- Divergent national legislation on tuition and other fees;
- Divergent national legislation on the use of different languages of instruction;
- Divergent national legislation on the issuing of diplomas: authority issuing; format of diplomas; payment of fees for diploma issuing;
- Divergent funding mechanisms for the delivery of programmes and staffing;
- Divergent selection and admission regulations and processes;
- Lack of funds for student and staff mobility (including ineligibility for Erasmus+ funds for those registered simultaneously at “home” and “host” universities);
- Lack of full adoption of ECTS culture (beyond the formality of the credit system);
- Lack of trust in other EHEA systems despite the existence of strong QA structures, leading to the questioning of automatic recognition;
- Employers’ lack of knowledge or recognition of joint degrees as opposed to well-established national degrees.¹⁶

¹⁶ Such obstacles were also analysed as part of the needs analysis prepared in the framework of the application submitted by Arqus European University Alliance (of which the University of Padova is part of) under the European Joint Degree Label Call in October 2022.

In addition to this, the award of **joint degrees** is hampered by incompatible requirements in the delivery of joint transnational educational activities and programmes, e.g. differences in grading and credit allocations, even when following the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS); curricula with different minimum or maximum ECTS credits per course, complex and diverging accreditation mechanisms and different forms of institutional autonomy (see [PART 1](#) for additional information).

HEIs across Europe are increasingly aware of these challenges and have tried to address them at different levels - institutional, national and European. This awareness has also grown during the first implementation phase of the European University Initiative. Each of the alliances has analysed the difficulties involved, through focus groups, seminars and meetings with the European Commission, national authorities, quality assurance agencies, and desk research.

It has become increasingly clear that current challenges related to the full implementation of JP within the EHEA, given their complex and diverse nature, require a broad-based, multi-level and collective effort for their elimination, often impeded by the narrowly national contexts in which debates occur.

Digitalisation of teaching and learning

EUA's survey report outlines that, "while the situation of individual institutions and systems is quite diverse, there is a **strong alignment between what leadership identifies as top enablers and barriers to DELT across Europe**. This is about the implementation of strategic approaches throughout the entire institution, requiring the proactive participation of staff and students, staff development, and funding for building the necessary resources. Other external problems, such as regulation and external quality assurance, were found challenging by larger numbers of institutions only in some countries"¹⁷.

Top three barriers to digitally enhanced learning and teaching



Figure 4 Q14: What are the top 3 barriers to digitally enhanced learning and teaching at your institution? (please select your top three choices) n= 368

¹⁷ <https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/digihe%20new%20version.pdf> p. 47

As far as national regulation is concerned, as also confirmed by the analysis presented in Part 1 of this Handbook, the scenario around recognition and flexibility in DELT implementation varies widely across Europe. Also the [Bologna Process Implementation report](#) (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018, p. 77) pointed out that few countries prioritise adapting programmes to digital provision and related certification processes. In practice this can mean that use of blended learning is tolerated as long as it remains a marginal component of the course. If digitally enhanced provision exceeds a certain percentage, the course would have to be re-accredited under different rules (e.g. as in Italy). Moreover, national regulations and external QA often require the physical presence of staff and students at the university.

Digitalisation in Joint Programmes

Digitalisation in JPs certainly offers many opportunities, as described in detail in Part 2 of this Handbook. Yet, being so new and experimental, it still poses many challenges which not only combine the challenges related to JPs and DELT presented above, but also add additional ones. Below some of these challenges, as identified by the GO-DIJIP team through desk research, surveys, and feedback by participants in various project activities and training courses:

- Lack of awareness of possible opportunities related to JP digitalisation
- Lack of staff expertise in this field
- Still limited best practices in designing JP with strong digital elements
- Limited exchange of expertise and experiences between JP coordinators
- Regulatory obstacles related to integration of virtual mobility / Virtual Exchange / blended mobility into university degree courses, included JPs (e.g. in Italy)
- Regulatory obstacles and/or absence of regulations related to the development and implementation of fully online JPs, without physical mobility (e.g. in Norway or China)
- Obstacles in applying for funding programmes to support JPs (e.g. Erasmus Mundus) for fully blended/hybrid JP, since physical mobility is still a compulsory requirement.
- Lack of interoperability between digital infrastructures of HEIs across the EU, linked to the unevenness in individual HEIs' capacity and available resources to develop and access such digital infrastructure, limiting the potential of online collaborative learning and teaching: this is extremely relevant when looking at the emergence of European (virtual) inter-university campuses and platforms¹⁸.

In the past two years, the GO-DIJIP project has tried to address the first three obstacles by offering comprehensive information and training resources to develop staff capacity in this field. Through this Handbook (ref. next section) it also aims at providing a set of recommendations to address the other challenges mentioned above, which certainly require reflection at a wider and higher policy level.

¹⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0017>

Key recommendations

The following section provides summary recommendations developed by the GO-DIJIP team to fully exploit the potential of digitalisation in JPs.

The proposed recommendations are in line with EHEA key values and build upon more general policy recommendations in the field of Higher Education such as:

- “Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA” prepared by the BFUG Advisory Group 2 on Learning and Teaching (2020), structured around the need for student-centred learning, the enhancement of teaching, and the overarching importance of national and international dialogue involving all stakeholders;
- Recommendations for “Improving Digitally Enhanced Learning and Teaching in European Higher Education Institutions” put forward by EUA in collaboration with other European institutions, focusing amongst others on the importance on peer exchange, training opportunities for staff in charge of digital transformation, data collection & analysis, policy exchange and strategic discussion at national and international level (making best use of existing networks), etc.
- Council Recommendation on “Building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation” proposed by the European Commission and adopted by the Council in May 2022.

The latter document is particularly relevant in this context as it calls for important changes to support both JPs and online collaborative teaching & learning, such as to:

- **Encourage and make it easier** for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) engaged in transnational cooperation **to provide Joint Programmes** and award joint degrees;
- Facilitate the delivery at national level of a **joint European Degree Label**;
- Enable the full implementation of the **European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes**, without further additional national requirements or conditions to the use of the European Approach; ensure that the external evaluation of joint transnational programmes can be done by one single agency registered in the **European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)** and that the outcomes are automatically accepted in all other higher education systems concerned, without adding further national requirements or procedural steps;
- Enable HEIs to **develop and implement innovative joint transnational education activities** by allowing them to put in place suitable approaches and measures in relation to, amongst others: (a) sharing of **online learning** in the overall educational offer; (b) **sharing of student mobility (physical, virtual learning or blended)** embedded in the joint educational activity; and (c) sharing and organisation of internships, work-based learning activities, challenge-based and interdisciplinary approaches; (c) working towards more **coherent approaches for learning mobility** in terms of admissions systems, academic calendars, tuition fee systems, access to and use of higher education facilities over summer/holiday months.
- **Include flexible learning pathways**, such as small learning experiences leading to micro-credentials,
- Support **embedded mobility** in joint transnational educational programmes (physical, virtual learning, blended) in a more systematic and flexible way, at all levels, to allow a larger body of students, academics and researchers to benefit from the dynamics of integrated higher education cooperation and to promote balanced talent circulation.
- **Foster the digitalisation of mobility management** within multilateral partnerships of HEIs by upscaling the use of the European Student Card Initiative

- Support the development of **high-quality virtual collaborative learning** as an integral part of teaching, learning and research, to foster and facilitate inclusive and student-centred transnational cooperation, that complements face-to-face interactions, and in particular to: (a) Support HEIs to develop virtual collaborative online international learning models as an integral part of a hybrid education, including through leadership commitment, strategic planning, robust and internationalised pedagogical training and support services, and appropriate funding. (b) Valorise and recognise - in their career assessment - the time spent by academics in the development of new innovative pedagogies through transnational cooperation. (c) Support European Universities alliances and similar institutionalised cooperation models in their efforts to pool expertise and resources to develop and implement **joint digital strategies and shared interoperable IT infrastructure**, for example by granting mutual access to online learning and research environments, learning management systems, digital libraries or massive open online course (MOOC) platforms, training and support services, seamless access to findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (FAIR) data and other interoperable services. (d) Support the piloting and testing of open source solutions to overcome common challenges, thus contributing to the interoperability, digital readiness, data sovereignty and responsibility of higher education systems.

The GO-DIJIP team fully endorses the above recommendations and adds the following ones with specific reference to the integration of digital elements in JPs:

- **Continue raising awareness of possible opportunities related to JP digitalisation**, at institutional, national and international level (e.g. during EU events on JPs, in the context of Working groups of European Alliances and other networks and associations, etc.)
- **Continue supporting training programmes on digital tools & skills** specifically targeting JP coordinators, administrators, students
- **Integrate and further develop the repository of best practices** collected by GO-DIJIP through the Amplifier Platform **into the future Erasmus Mundus Support Structure** (to be implemented soon¹⁹).
- Make sure to open up the Support Structure to European University Alliances and other JP practitioners, therefore not limiting it to Erasmus Mundus courses.
- Make the necessary regulatory changes so to **ensure that national legislation allows for maximum flexibility with regards to the integration of virtual mobility / Virtual Exchange / blended mobility** into university degree courses, including JPs
- **Facilitate the awarding and full recognition of ECTS related to virtual courses** (including Virtual Exchange, Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programmes, online courses, etc.)
- **Further analyse current obstacles in EHEA countries towards the development and implementation of fully online JPs** – this could e.g. be done in the framework of the European Joint Degree Label Call.

We hope that these recommendations can be taken into account by national and European policy makers, with a view to advancing towards Bologna objectives and contributing to a more inclusive, innovative and interconnected higher education.

¹⁹ <https://etendering.ted.europa.eu/cft/cft-display.html?cftId=11565>