

PORTFOLIO

The **Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) "Connecting Cultures: Sustainability, Travel, Translation & Migration"** is a **5 ECTS** course open to ENLIGHT postgraduate, master and PhD students of various disciplines (especially humanities and social sciences). It is an example of how **Challenge Based Education (CBE)** can be carried out in the field of the humanities. An example of pedagogical **innovation** where the teaching and learning approach encourages students to put their knowledge and **creativity** at the service of civil society, working with peers, teachers and sociocultural agents to design together solutions to the **challenges of today's society**.



Students & teaching staff. Photo: Nuria Gonzalez

The course aims at providing students a framework for analyzing **the complexities of cultural interactions and their implications for sustainability**, for understanding how the ways in which cultures interact, influence and transform each other can be crucial to fostering sustainable and inclusive societies. Key topics covered in the course include impacts and power dynamics involved in encounters between cultures, the potential of travel for fostering intercultural understanding and sustainable development, the role of language in cultural transfer, the challenges and opportunities of (both interlingual and intercultural) translation, the impact of translation and cultural transfer on social change, the cultural dynamics resulting from migration (cultural adaptation, hybridity, identity formation).

Throughout the course, students engage in critical discussions, case studies, and collaborative projects to deepen their understanding of the complex relationships between travel, translation, migration and sustainable development. During the on-site week, students apply the acquired knowledge through a **challenge-based learning process focusing on cultural transfers linked to SDG achievements**. The challenges are linked to the research interests of the participants and are formulated **in collaboration with external sociocultural agents**.



Workshop with agents. Photo: Nuria Gonzalez

The **first edition** of this BIP, which took place between March and May 2024, was hosted by the **University of the Basque Country (UPV/EU)** and coordinated by professor Frederik Verbeke. The **teaching staff** was made up of professors from the **University of Galway** (Anne O'Connor, Raluca Tanasescu, Andrea Ciribuco), the **University of Groningen** (Petra Broomans, Jeanette den Toonder), the **University of Tartu** (Luc van Doorslaer, Sirje Kupp-Sazonov) and the **University of the Basque Country** (Frederik Verbeke, M. Carmen Encinas, Garbiñe Iztueta, Carme Bescansa). About **twenty-five master's and doctoral students**

participated in the course, representing an impressive linguistic and cultural diversity. In fact, they came from the universities of Galway, Tartu, Uppsala, Gent, Bratislava, Groningen and the Basque Country, but their cultural ties were not limited to Ireland, Sweden, Belgium, the Basque Country, Estonia and Slovakia, they extended much further: Iran, Indonesia, New Zealand, Colombia, Serbia, Italy, Germany, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, United States, etc

The **first part** of the course was done **online** during the months of March and April (five sessions of three hours each, on Friday morning, via Teams). Students started from the **general idea** of the course (cultural transfers and sustainability) to determine different **essential questions** and defined, according to their personal and academic interests, the **challenges** they would like to address. These challenges were taken into account when contacting the agents with whom students would work during the on-site week.

In each online session they continued to investigate and debate these challenges, transferring

"Having experienced hybrid/online learning during the COVID19 crisis, it was refreshing to experience a form of online learning that was almost as engaging as face-to-face courses" (Student's feedback)

knowledge and experiences from their own cultures, and interacting with the topics raised in the lectures given by the course staff. Each conference was followed by small group and plenary discussions. The knowledge that emerged from these **dynamic and interactive online sessions** would be an important

resource to find and co-design solutions to the challenges that would be formulated in interaction with sociocultural agents during the on-site week. In each online session, the composition of the small groups was modified so that the students all got to know each other little by little.

The **second part** of the course took place on site, at the **Faculty of Arts** of the **University of the Basque Country** in Vitoria-Gasteiz, from May 13 to 17.

On the first day, Professor Raili Marling's opening keynote (University of Tartu) focused on power imbalances in intercultural communication, whereas Begoña Guzman, from the UNESCO Etxea, gave a short lecture on culture and sustainability, and PhD researcher Itxaso Etxeberria presented the action

"The knowledge and experiences gained from this program will undoubtedly influence my future academic pursuits and personal endeavors, fostering a lifelong appreciation for cultural connectivity and sustainability." (Student's feedback)

research she would carry out during the week on the multilingual and multicultural reality of the

"Following on this preliminary knowledge that we gained during the online lectures, we were able to better reflect in a critical way on the academic knowledge and the socio-cultural challenges presented to us in the workshops." (Student's feedback)

group, collecting data on the linguistic practices and the linguistic landscape of the course and contributing to awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity. On Monday afternoon, several **sociocultural agents**, representatives of **five associations, NGOs and cultural institutions** (UNESCO Etxea, Etxepare Euskal Institutua, Basque Culinary Center, Accem, Irsearaba) joined the

course. A workshop designed and animated by *Hibridalab*, *Alava Open Innovation and Creative Transfer Center*, immersed students, teachers and agents in a dynamic of **"improbable connections"**, which triggered a **co-creation** process that spanned three days and at the end of

which the students had to come up with a proposal responding to the challenges. The agents marked the **authentic, real-world contexts** in which to face the challenges.

At the end of the on-site week, the Faculty of Arts hosted a **two-day research seminar** (May 16-17), **ENLIGHT Research Seminar on Cultural Transfer and Sustainability**, organized by the research group IdeoLit. This seminar was the setting where the students presented the proposals they had designed and discussed them in a plenary session with the agents, the course teaching staff and international experts. Before these presentations, the experts (Michael Cronin, Pierre Schoentjes, Sara Buekens, Sarah De Mul and Massih Zekavat) gave some “dialogic” conferences¹ on Thursday morning, resuming the academic reflection and discussions on the course topic. After three days of creativity and innovation it was time to look back and reflect.

“The participation of the local organisations has allowed the course to bridge our academic thinking with the reality of the world outside of the lectures, as we developed our projects in horizontal collaborations among students, teachers and civil society actors.” (Student’s feedback)

On the last day, teachers and students engaged in a **collective reflection on the learning and teaching experience** of this BIP. Students had to write a **final report** where they reflect, among

“I have been able to gain new connections and perspectives that I will cherish in the course of both my personal as well as professional life. Bringing together students, researchers, and socio-cultural workers from all corners of the globe as made this course all the more enriching and has presented us with the possibilities to foster an inclusive and truly diverse multiculturalism.” (Student’s feedback)

other things, on the learning experience, group dynamics, the impact of the course both academically and personally, and the cultural transfers that have occurred during the on-site week. The teaching staff, for their part, participated in a **networking session to design future collaborative initiatives within the framework of ENLIGHT**, both at the

teaching and research levels. Professor Unai Pascual (Ikerbasque, Basque Center for Climate Change) gave a fascinating **closing keynote conference**, creating **connections between the Humanities and other scientific disciplines**.

Three **cultural activities** completed the program: a **guided tour** of the historic center of Vitoria-Gasteiz (Tuesday), a **musical encounter** with Esther Gabiola and Benjamin Alonso, who invited participants to connect their cultures by singing and dancing (Wednesday), and a **social dining** on Thursday evening. And to all this we must add the cultural connections that occurred thanks to the fact that the students were all staying in the same hostel, in collective rooms and with a common kitchen, in the old town of Vitoria-Gasteiz.

“The on-site week enriched our experience since we had so many interesting discussions that we could continue after lectures and class hours in a more informal way. [...] we connected in a very deep way to the topics and with each other during the week. I gained new perspectives and new connections that I hope to maintain in the future.” (Student’s feedback)

¹ **Video recordings** of plenary sessions with invited lecturers: <https://ehutb.ehu.es/series/66507c0aaf192308b601c693>

One of the objective's of this BIP course was to put **Challenge Based Education (CBE)** into practice, a pedagogical model that both ENLIGHT and the UPV/EHU promote. For this reason, the course had the support of the Vice-Rector's Office for Undergraduate Studies and Educational Innovation and of the UPV/EHU's Educational Advisory Service (SAE-HELAZ) and, in particular, the newly

"The approach taken for this course enhanced our learning experience as it foregrounded an interactive way of teaching and learning in which discussions between students, teachers and socio-cultural agents could take place in a more equal and horizontal way." (Student's feedback)

created **Living Lab CBE i3lab**, whose objective is precisely to focus on CBE methodology in a coherent manner and aligned with the ENLIGHT project. In the feedback questionnaire, all 25 students have described how well the challenge-based learning methodology was implemented and highlighted how it enhanced their learning experience.

Both the course and the research seminar also received **financial support** of the following institutions: European Commission (Erasmus+), ENLIGHT, Vice-rectorate for International Relations, Faculty of Arts, Department of Philology and History, IdeoLit research group, and Master and Doctoral Program in Comparative Literature and Literary Studies (UPV/EHU).

"I believe that much of what I have learned from both lecturers and peers during this short course will stand to me for a long time, and feeling as if I have been successful both personally and academically in this course leaves me with excitement for what is to come next in my research and career." (Student's feedback)

Assessments took place in both formative and summative forms, during the online course activities and during the on-site week. Students were required to participate actively in different activities and to submit deliverables (reports, presentations, ...). To receive a final grade for the course, students needed to actively participate in all lectures and workshops and successfully complete compulsory activities. All

students submitted a **final report** of 2000 words in which they reflect on their learning experience, on group dynamics, relate their individual perspective and personal contribution to group dynamics and activities, reflect on the course's impact on both academic (research) and personal level, reflect on cultural transfers that took place during on-site week, on what they have learned from this experience. A final report in which they had to include references to online conferences and on-site week activities. The reports were evaluated using an evaluation rubric with 5 criteria.

The 25 students who attended the on-site week also filled out a **feedback questionnaire**, confirming the great success of the course, but also giving very valuable information to improve future editions. Both final reports and feedback questionnaires show **the enormous positive impact that the course has left on the students**, and invite to share the experience as a good practice of CBE and design new editions.

Please, access the [shared folder](#) to view the following **evidences**: programme handbook, screenshots of online platform, photos, media coverage, final reports and feedback questionnaire: <https://shorturl.at/bQdnx>

A **summary video** is being edited and will be released soon, which will be a very useful resource to promote the course for future editions.

