



Co-funded by
the European Union

FACULTY OF MEDICINE UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO

THE BUDDY SYSTEM

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education
Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through
internationalization at home BIOSINT
101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union

TABLE OF CONTENT:

1. About the Buddy System
2. The buddy system organization strategy - stages
 - a. Making an online platform
 - b. Forming the infrastructure
 - c. Registration for buddy
 - d. Buddy Training
 - e. Registration for international students
 - f. The Matching Process
 - g. Evaluating the student satisfaction
3. The buddy obligations
 - a. Before Their Arrival
 - b. Upon Their Arrival
 - c. During and After the Exchange
4. Promoting the buddy program

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education
Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through
internationalization at home

BIOSINT101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union

1. About the buddy system

The buddy system is a procedure in which two individuals, the "buddies", operate together as a single unit so that they are able to monitor and help each other. The first known use of the phrase "buddy system" goes back to 1942.

The concept is used in many different fields, including among students. It's variations are used worldwide in elementary schools, high schools and colleges – matching older and younger students, students with different disabilities with their classmates.

Lately many Universities across the globe through the process of internationalization are trying to establish versions of this program to help international students.

The Buddy System program is designed to match international students with the local students based on the different principles and mainly work on volunteer basis. With growing number of international students every University and it's units are responsible to facilitate their admission and adjustment process by including domestic students. It is supposed to be as useful for incoming as for the local students, where each pair can develop in various fields of studying, personality, understanding and accepting differences.

Through the program international students can expect help in adaptation to a new educational but also local social and cultural environment, to easily integrate with local community. Local buddy can help incoming student upon arrival, finding a place to stay, help in translation but also in learning local phrases, introducing him/her with University units and other students, emergency protocols and also be city/country guide.

Meanwhile domestic students can develop international friendships and English language skills, increase their cultural sensitivity and skills when it comes to interacting and working with people from different backgrounds, learn about other cultures, develop cognitive skills, general education and intellectual development, which can later on help them in their future employment.

The program is a student-led initiative and it is supposed to be connecting different students' organizations through the University. It is all about exchanging experiences, making international friendships, and learning about different cultures but also connecting domestic students through this working process.

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education
Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through
internationalization at home

BIOSINT101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union

2. The buddy system organization strategy – stages

As for the buddy system strategy for Faculty of Medicine, UoM, the first step is involving existing student organizations involved in exchange process and student parliament to facilitate process. Mainly, the first students involved in these programs are those already been part of the exchange and have some sort of international experience and know the importance of being properly informed about all the aspects of coming to new environment.

a. Making an online platform

The strategy involves making an online platform as the part of the Faculty of Medicine website. There will be information about the program in bilingual form, in order to be more understandable for both domestic and incoming student. Potential buddies and incoming students wanting to much will be able to make online registration and after matching process will be able to make first contacts with their buddy. It will be the place for every other notification regarding the program and events.

b. Forming an infrastructure

While making this program for a first time students with most international experience will be the ones involved in leading student positions:

- I. the Main coordinator
- II. different students program coordinators:
 - i. For study program of medicine
 - ii. For study program of dentistry
 - iii. For study program of pharmacy
 - iv. For postgraduate studies
- III. Student in charge in correlations with other students` organizations and local stakeholders

Also the one involved is the Vice dean for international cooperation and their team who will closely cooperate with students in development and sustainability of buddy program.

The Main Coordinator with the help of other coordinators is responsible for the organization aspects of the Buddy Program, as well as the on-going case management for assigned buddy pairs. Some tasks according to Buddysystem.eu should be:

- They should be involved in executing the matching process and additionally, they are putting the international and local students in touch with one another and making sure that they have each other's contact information.
- They are executing or coordinating training for the buddies - sending documents (Buddy Guides) and organising a meeting (virtual or physical) with local students to make sure that they understand their role.
- They ensure that the local and international students know that the Main Coordinator is their main point of contact in case of any issues, complaints or misinformation
- They coordinate the feedback process from international and local students about their experience.

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education

Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through internationalization at home

BIOSINT101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

- They coordinate events among students at the faculty, at the University by communicating with other units
- They are responsible with other coordinators to help students get in touch with local stakeholders to facilitate participation in sports or culture events
- They should start and manage their profile in social media networks, with continuously uploading new announcements and answering questions received by the students

c. The registration for buddy

Potential buddy will have to fill the application form available on the Faculty website. The draft version includes following questions:

1. Name and surname
2. Gender
3. Date of birth
4. Phone number and e-mail
5. Study program and year of study
6. Spoken languages
7. International experience / studying abroad
8. Involvement if different study organizations at the domestic University
9. Involvement in sport or different cultural clubs / events
10. Other hobbies and interests
11. Expectations from buddy program
12. Any preferences for matching with international student
13. Number of international students to be matched with
14. Anything important to mention for future international student match

After receiving the application, the coordinators will have an interview with potential buddies in order to have more insights for future matchmaking.

d. The buddy training

Everyone involved in the buddy program - local buddies, university staff, volunteers should be given proper training to be able to deal with their responsibilities.

As by some examples from already established European Buddy System organization the training should cover aspects like:

- How to handle the matching tool and process in the most responsible manner.
- How to accompany and facilitate the process of the established relationships.
- How to motivate the buddy community and develop their transversal skills like intercultural communication, event management, public speaking, accountability etc.
- How to assure the inclusiveness of buddy program.
- How to inform best practices in buddy-incoming students relationships.
- How to deal with complaints and uncomfortable situations.
- How to provide feedback effectively

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education
Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through
internationalization at home

BIOSINT101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

The buddy training can take the following forms or a combination of the forms:

- Joined sessions or workshops.
- Virtual training or webinars.
- Providing documentation about the program and how it is organized in different Universities.
- Making combined meeting and training with other University units for diversity

e. The registration for incoming students

Similar to buddy registration process there will be online form for incoming students to fill and should include the following questions:

1. Name and surname
2. Gender
3. Date of birth
4. Phone number and e-mail
5. Study program and year of study
6. Spoken languages
7. International experience / studying abroad
8. Involvement if different study organizations at the domestic University
9. Involvement in sport or different cultural clubs / events
10. Other hobbies and interests
11. Expectations from buddy program
12. Any preferences for matching with local buddy
13. Number of buddies to be matched with
14. Anything important to mention for future buddy match

f. The matching process

For start the matching process will be held by local students – coordinators with international relation staff, based on the data received by the forms and not randomly assigned. Usual criteria used in matching process by different programs include spoken languages, field of study, gender preferences, hobbies and availability of the buddy.

g. Evaluating the student satisfaction

During and after finishing the time period assigned for local-international student pair each will fill in the form to evaluate the entire process, organization, and each other, in order to continuously develop and improve the program. The above mentioned form should include questions:

1. How do you rate the online platform?
2. Do you think platform is easy to use?

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education
Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through
internationalization at home

BIOSINT101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

3. Did you get all the needed information before applying for the program?
4. Did the program met your expectation?
5. Did you get in touch with you buddy/incoming students easily? Where they responsive
6. How many times did you met and in which circumstances?
7. Where they helpful?
8. Describe the situations you provided/received help
9. Describe if you participated in any events
10. Did you get in touch with local and main coordinators easily? Where they responsive?
11. Write your suggestions for improving the platform
12. Write your suggestion for improving the program
13. Would you recommend the program to your fellow students?
14. Do you wish to see/hear from/meet you match again? Will you keep in touch?

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education
Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through
internationalization at home

BIOSINT101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union

3. The buddy obligations

a. Before the arrival

The host institution is supposed to ensure that their International Relations Office (IROs)/Mobility Office or in our case International relation team provide student organizations with the relevant information in advance in order for them to facilitate the connection between local students and international students.

The main coordinator and other coordinators should be in close contact with the local buddies in order to ensure that the assignment and confirmation of buddies is done in an effective way, before the incoming students apply, to have the overall idea how many students are available in which time period.

After receiving the application the incoming and local students will go through matching process. When it is finished coordinators will contact both local and incoming students, introduce themselves and ask them any questions they might have in order to get to know each other. They should be prepared to answer any questions buddies, especially first time involved in program buddies could have to help them for this experience and make them aware that will provide full support during this process. They will also invite incoming students to any new group created on social media for the international students of each semester or year.

Afterwards buddy should contact their match through preferred social network, phone call, text messages, e-mail or other means, to be introduced before the arrival and make final arrangements for picking them up upon the arrival and prepare in case of further assistance with the documents.

b. Upon the arrival

Incoming students appreciate if they knew that someone is going to pick them up when they arrive at a new environment. If their match is not available to do that, someone else from buddy community should be assigned to do so. The first contact should also include helping them reach their accommodation safely. It is also crucial to show them around the University campus - faculty/department, rectorate building, International Relations Office, student canteen, bus stops and information centers.

During the first week of their arrival, it is important to provide any requested assistance with the registration, student ID and enrolment, to show them around the city and provide support when they have to go to the authorities (registration at the Citizens' Office), assistance with their VISA card especially in language translation and cultural customs and mannerisms.

c. During the exchange

The local buddy can continue providing practical assistance to the international student in translating documents, helping with doctor's appointments, etc depending on their own obligations and abilities.

Also local and incoming students can spend time attending events together, parties, quiz nights, trips, sightseeing, experiencing nature depending on their preferences and available

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education

Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through internationalization at home

BIOSINT101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

free time. It is recommended to get in touch with other University units to connect with other exchange students with similar background, make event together such as buddy challenges, dinners, sports activities, game nights etc. more at the beginning and at the end, while during the exchange period are less important.

Students and staff in charge should also try to organize goodbye hangouts, meetings or trips, and provide goodbye gifts (personal thought, messages connected with national souvenirs) but also encourage students to stay in touch.

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education

Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through
internationalization at home

BIOSINT101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



4. Promoting the buddy program

The main communication ways and channels used to promote buddy programs is direct digital communication such as newsletters or emailing. It should contain basic information about buddy program written in adequate way, with emphasizing all the benefits for local students included with various motivating messages.

Another equally popular choice is social media, the website of the Faculty/University, printed communication, network of the university and events on campus.

Since the buddy program is designed on volunteer bases already established strategy for the Faculty of medicine includes the preparing Certificates for internationalization and Bonus for future mobilities in order to additionally motivate students.

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education

Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through internationalization at home

BIOSINT101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

1. https://buddysystem.eu/docs/The_buddy_programs_practices_in_Europe.pdf
2. https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/99ddacda-e787-4421-ad64-3f2eae2e04c/IO6_AllContents_Logo.pdf
3. <https://buddysystem.eu/en/>

Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education

Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through
internationalization at home

BIOSINT101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.