



# **STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF EPALE IN ITS FIRST TWO YEARS OF OPERATION (JANUARY 2015 - DECEMBER 2016) AND ITS POTENTIAL FUTURE IMPACT**

Executive summary

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## Executive Summary

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### Objectives of the evaluation

The European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), commissioned a *Study on the Impact of EPAL in its first two years of operation (January 2015 – December 2016), and its potential future impact*, which was implemented by Ramboll Management Consulting A/S. The present document is the Final Report presenting the key findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPAL). The objectives of the evaluation were dual: (a) to investigate the progress made and results achieved by EPAL in its first two years of implementation as well as identify potential pitfalls and weaknesses in its implementation and, (b) to provide recommendations for the improvement of the platform in the future.

### Methodological Approach

The evaluation had a strong **summative** dimension, as it sought to assess the **relevance, effectiveness** (both concerning results and impacts and operational effectiveness), **efficiency, coherence** and **complementarity** and **added value** of EPAL during its first two years of operation, as well as a **formative** dimension as it sought to provide implementable recommendations for improvement of EPAL.

The methodological approach had a strong **user-centric focus**, i.e. it set high emphasis on the perspective of the individual users (and potential users) to generate an in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the EPAL platform as a means to build and develop a community for adult learning.

The evaluation relied on a **mixed methods approach**, making use of both qualitative and quantitative data collected through desk review, a stakeholder survey, EU level and national level interviews and focus groups.

Extensive **desk research** was performed, analysing the statistics on the performance of EPAL and conducting a social network analysis of patterns of interaction between users on the platform. This was complemented with a **stakeholder survey** in which 2,417 respondents participated, reaching good geographical coverage of respondents from all countries involved in EPAL, and including respondents from all relevant groups of users. **Interviews** were conducted at EU level with 14 EU representatives and at national level with 70 stakeholders including various types of relevant stakeholders from Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Finland, Estonia, Turkey. In addition to this, three **focus group** were conducted in Malta, Bulgaria and Italy.

### The Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPAL)

In order to contribute to the realisation of the objectives of the strategic framework for Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) the European Commission launched EPAL

in 2015 to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practices concerning adult education and to support the building of a trans-national community of adult educators in Europe.

EPALE<sup>1</sup> is an electronic multi-lingual platform with an open membership which is aimed at facilitating the sharing of relevant and good quality content on adult education and at building a virtual community of teachers, trainers, researchers, academics, policy makers and anyone else with a professional role in adult learning across Europe. The platform is translated into 24 languages. It uses a customised version of Drupal, as developed by DG DIGIT.

EPALE offers a variety of functionalities including EPALE news, EPALE Blog, EPALE Resource centre containing training materials and tools for adult educators, and a calendar informing members of EPALE of events/courses and other activities related to the adult learning field. EPALE also offers adult education providers the chance to network and interact with peers by participating in discussions in Communities of Practice and private groups, by posting comments on news and blog items, by publishing content or by linking / disliking content. It includes a variety of content ranging from learner support and environment materials, to "life skills" specific topics (Languages, entrepreneurship and employability, cultural education, etc.), quality of teaching methods and information concerning education and training policy.

EU Policy on Adult Education, of which EPALE is a key instrument, is the responsibility of DG EMPL. The general management of EPALE falls under the responsibility of DG Education and Culture (DG EAC), which manages the Erasmus+ Programme under which EPALE is funded. DG EAC is supported in the implementation by the Education, Culture and Audiovisual Executive Agency (EACEA). The EACEA is in charge of the contractual arrangements with the Central Support Service (CSS) and the 36 National Support Services (NSS). EPALE Ambassadors also play a role in increasing the visibility of EPALE. The development of EPALE is overseen by a Steering Committee which comprises representatives of DG EMPL, DG EAC and the EACEA.

### **Key findings, conclusions and recommendations**

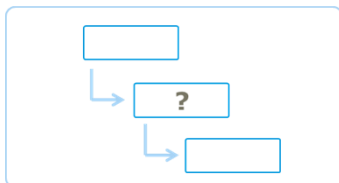
The evaluation's key conclusions and recommendations are presented below, preceded by a brief recount of the findings of the evaluation. Further conclusions and recommendations can be found in Chapter 4.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/home-page>

## Relevance of EPALE

**Conclusion 1:** EPALE is relevant in contributing to tackling challenges in the field of adult education but there is a perceived lack of clarity and awareness to its objectives and insufficient visibility of the platform.



The **findings** show that EPALE is primarily relevant as a 'community of interest' or a virtual place that users access to find relevant information on adult education and to a lesser extent as a 'community of practice' that users join to share their own experiences. This can be connected to a

perceived lack of clarity and limited awareness among EPALE users about its objectives and mission. As such, the findings suggest a need to improve the clarity of the objectives and mandate of EPALE. Generally, EPALE is relevant in addressing the needs of adult educators and can contribute to tackling systemic challenges in the field of adult education in several manners by:

- Providing a virtual space for the exchange of knowledge and information on good practices in adult education and facilitating networking between educators.
- Supporting partnership formation for projects in the field of adult education.

**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended that the European Commission further define the mission of EPALE and connect it more closely to systemic challenges in the field of adult education through, for example, a paper describing the objectives and 'mission' of the platform.

**Recommendation 2:** It is recommended that the European Commission and CSS revise the FAQ section on the platform to ensure that the mission and vision of EPALE are clearly presented to stakeholders. Potentially, a short but remarkable slogan or motto of EPALE can be drafted and displayed on the webpage under EPALE's name that will draw users' attention to EPALE's mission and mandate, e.g. 'EPALE – an interactive community of practitioners in adult education for networking and exchange of good practice across Europe'.

**Conclusion 2:** The themes, sub-themes and content available on EPALE are generally relevant in meeting the needs of users but further streamlining, personalising and checking the content is necessary.



The **findings** suggest that the platform ensures adequate coverage of themes of relevance in the field of adult education and evidence shows that users can generally find on EPALE content that meets their needs. This is a positive finding given that most of the content is

generated by NSS representatives, which are bound by a contractual obligation. However, the findings suggest that the manner in which the content is presented on the platform is not intuitive and the search function does not always retrieve content that is sought by users. Additionally, more emphasis should be put on the controlling

the quality of content and curating the growing body of knowledge and information hosted on EPALE.

**Recommendation 3:** It is recommended that the CSS further streamline and present the information on the platform in an intuitive and user-friendly manner. This can be done by taking the following actions:

- Embed a function that filters the content according to what is relevant for specific users (e.g. function 'Show me content relevant for... adult learning providers'). A function of 'Show me all content' should also be made available to ensure that the users can have full access to all information at any time if they chose so.
- Re-organise the navigation menu by content that is relevant to different types of users or reduce / cluster the number of themes and sub-themes.

**Recommendation 4:** It is recommended that the CSS embed relevance rating mechanisms (e.g. rating of content, reviews posting on content), and tagging mechanisms (e.g. using metadata tags (hashtags)) to increase trust in the relevance and accuracy of content and allow for relevant content to be easily identified.

**Conclusion 3:** The user base of EPALE is highly diverse and includes stakeholders with different expectations and needs. The relevance, utility and visibility of the platform varies depending on the target audience.



The **findings** indicate that EPALE has a wide and diverse user base and the assessment of the relevance of the platform varies depending on certain characteristics of specific types of users. For instance, the assessment of the usefulness and relevance of EPALE seems to vary according to the level of digital literacy or even level of engagement of the users in the adult learning sector.

**Recommendation 5:** It is recommended that the European Commission, CSS and NSS perform a more in-depth needs assessment study to better understand the needs of the diverse user base / potential user population.

**Recommendation 6:** It is recommended that the CSS and NSSs respond to the need to increase digital literacy by further developing a 'How to' / 'Help' section that contains detailed explanations, videos and step-by-step instructions on how to take utmost advantage of the EPALE's functionalities. The section should be easy to find by users with different levels of digital literacy. As such, it is recommended that the button for accessing it be moved in the top part of the platform or placed as a separate button in the navigation menu.

**Recommendation 7:** It is recommended that the European Commission, CSS and NSS review ways to complement the opportunities of users interacting in the virtual world with opportunities to interact in the 'real world'. The European Commission, CSS and NSS should, for example, organise events, seminars and meetings to allow

users, ambassadors and NSS representatives to network in real life. Such events and meetings can be focused simply on raising awareness about the platform (increasing visibility) and what it can offer potential users, and / or on instructing less digitally skilled people about how to use the platform and how it can benefit them in the short and long term and/or on discussing current themes and topics in the field of adult education.

## Effectiveness of EPALE (results and impacts)

**Conclusion 4:** EPALE has, as yet, had a limited impact on building a fully-fledged trans-national community of adult educators but it has contributed to building a 'landscape of adult learning and training communities'. Efforts need to be made to further consolidate and foster these communities.



The **findings** suggest that EPALE has had a limited impact on building a fully-fledged trans-national community of adult educators, but it has contributed to the creation of a 'landscape of communities' of adult learning and training. Evidence shows that EPALE has yet to generate a feeling of 'belonging' to a community of adult educators amongst

all users. Broadly speaking, EPALE accommodates and responds to the needs of users belonging to at least four types of communities, namely:

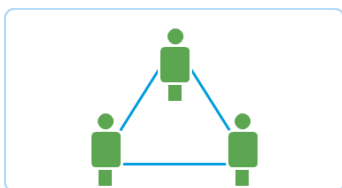
- communities of interest, bringing together stakeholders that seek up-to-date-information on adult education and training in Europe;
- communities of purpose, bringing together people who seek partners for project collaboration or similar endeavours in adult education and learning;
- communities of practice, bringing together stakeholders who seek to learn from others by exchanging experiences and good practices in the field of adult learning;
- communities of action, bringing together stakeholders who want to bring about change in adult education in Europe.

It should be duly noted that different communities have different needs which must be addressed in a tailored manner in order to increase the sense of belonging and participation.

**Recommendation 8:** It is recommended that the European Commission maintain EPALE as an open source of information available to all interested users. Content should not be restricted only to registered users as it would lead to a decrease of the utilisation of the platform.

**Recommendation 9:** It is recommended that the CSS further explore the possibility of adding interactive features to the various EPALE sections to assist users in accomplishing their 'purpose' (e.g. finding a partner for an application for European funding). Options to explore can include adding community features such as rating of content, recommendation and commenting features (example: Amazon reviews).

**Conclusion 5:** User loyalty, engagement and contribution on the platform are relatively low. Interactions via the platform are generally concentrated around a small and active core group of stakeholders interacting recurrently.



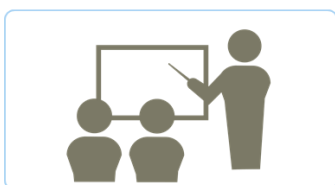
The **findings** indicate that user participation and engagement via the platform and the level of loyalty of users (i.e. number of returning visitors) is relatively low. Over the 2015-2016 period, only 37% of visitors were returning visitors and 70% of content was published by the NSSs as users generally browsed the platform passively without contributing. User interaction via the platform is also low and occurs predominantly in the NSS Groups and the Communities of Practice and Private Groups. This has important implications for building a real community of practice as the community needs to be self-sustaining to survive and 'genuine' users should be the main contributors.

**Recommendation 10:** It is recommended that the European Commission, CSS and NSS facilitate webinars and courses for users via the platform to engage the users.

**Recommendation 11:** It is recommended that the European Commission, CSS and NSS incentivise participation via the platform by having dedicated moderators that would facilitate discussions, validate opinions and rate content, as well as reach out to passive users to prompt their active engagement. The moderators can be engaged in various spaces of the platform, in particular in the Communities of Practice and the EPALE Blog, but they can also be called upon in the organisation of webinars on specific topics.

**Recommendation 12:** It is recommended that the CSS further develop the categories of types of users for registration to disincentive the use of the 'Other' category which would provide a better picture of users' needs.

**Conclusion 6:** Training opportunities, learning materials and good practices are generally relevant but the information must be further streamlined, and quality checked.



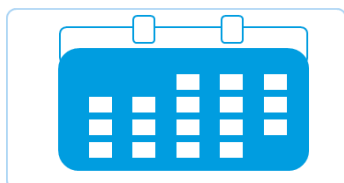
The **findings** show that EPALE has contributed to the dissemination of a substantive amount of training opportunities, learning materials and good practices. In the 2015-2016 period, a total of 14,510 content items were published on EPALE. Findings suggest that the content made available via EPALE is generally useful for adult learning providers in their everyday work. However, users considered that the information could be further streamlined to ensure easy access, and the NSSs considered that the stringent emphasis on key performance indicators that are quantitative in nature (e.g. amount of content published) is not optimal to incentivise a thorough quality check of the content.

**Recommendation 13:** It is recommended that the CSS and NSSs further streamline the content available on the platform and perform more regular and periodic quality checks of the content published on the platform.



**Recommendation 14:** It is recommended that the European Commission, and EACEA in particular, revise the key performance indicators for the NSSs and draft a list of qualitative performance indicators against which the NSSs should check the quality of content. Indicators can include e.g. relevance of content, timeliness of content, utility of content, clarity of content, accuracy and consistency of content, engagement, completeness of content, accessibility of content etc.

**Conclusion 7:** Improvements to the calendar of events are deemed necessary.



The **findings** show that the calendar of events was generally not assessed positively as users considered improvements were needed in order for its utilisation to increase. In particular, users were discontent with the fact that the content on the EPALE calendar was not organised in an intuitive manner to allow for the identification of relevant events. The translation of the content on the calendar was also considered necessary, where the information was relevant to a wider audience.

**Recommendation 15:** It is recommended that the CSS and NSSs explore options to improve the calendar of events by:

- Reorganising the calendar to make it more user friendly by exploring a different layout.
- Adding more information on the type of events taking place.
- Adding a function to allow users to review the events by commenting on them and post links to results from the events.
- Translate the content of the most important events relevant for a wider audience and/or add the Google Translate button next to each event.

**Conclusion 8:** The Partner Search Tool has been a useful tool of EPALE and has the potential to lead to the creation of partnerships for cooperation across Europe.



The Partner Search tool is utilised and relevant, but improvements can be made to encourage more engagement and utilisation of the tool. The extent to which EPALE has led to the creation of concrete partnerships is unclear as this is not monitored by the platform. However, instances of partnerships built via EPALE were reported. The Partner Search tool was assessed as useful and relevant for organisations seeking to establish intra-country and cross-border cooperation with other organisations. However, findings suggest that the Partner Search tool is used primarily for the purpose of finding partner organisations for applications for EU funding and it is only used to a minimal extent for other purposes (e.g. exchange ideas etc.).

**Recommendation 16:** It is recommended that the NSSs further encourage organisations to sign up for the Partner Search Tool and also seek partnerships that are related to activities other than 'application for EU funding'. This can be done by

further participating in events related to project developments where organisations may be seeking partners.

**Recommendation 17:** It is recommended that the CSS add an option on the Partner Search page whereby users are invited to contact the NSS if information about the types of partners they are looking for is not available on the webpage (e.g. include a note: "Have not found the partner or information you were searching for? Then contact your NSS for support" and add a link to the NSS list of contacts).

**Conclusion 9:** The user experience on the platform is not optimal and should be improved to allow the platform to reach its objectives.



The **findings** indicate that issues impair the functioning of the platform. Issues reported include: *technical issues*, such as the fact that the platform is slow, the registration process does not allow for an easy set-up of accounts and logging into accounts, *layout issues* such as the fact that the organisation of the content and the search function are not functioning optimally, and *functionalities issues* such as the fact that there are limited opportunities to react quickly to content published on the platform, limited opportunities for reviewing and tagging content. The sub-optimal performance of the platform was often connected in users' minds with the fact that it is hosted on the Drupal system but, based on the independent opinion of the IT expert that contributed to this assignment, it may be that the reasons behind the slow performance lie with the design of the platform (e.g. caching problems with the database or queries, bad script hindering the system to load pages properly).

**Recommendation 18:** It is recommended that the CSS further investigate the reasons behind the slow performance of the platform and resolve them. For this purpose, specialised IT expertise is needed.

**Recommendation 19:** It is recommended that the CSS further enhance the user experience by:

- Exploring the options for improving the user experience by streamlining the content (e.g. improving the navigation menu or re-organising the content) and making the browsing of the platform more user-friendly, enhancing the layout of the platform and increasing its appeal to potential users.
- Increasing the personalisation of content to specific target audiences and incentivising sharing of content by setting up rating systems for content quality (likes, dislikes, comments and ratings etc.).

**Conclusion 10:** The availability of information in all EU languages is considered a great advantage of the platform. The platform utilisation would decrease if the platform were available only in three languages.



The **findings** suggest that one of the main advantages of EPALE is that the platform is multi-lingual and offers users

content in all EU languages. The evidence shows that users generally consult the platform in their native language, but a considerable number of users use English to interact via the platform. However, awareness of the fact that different content can be found in different languages is not high amongst users. Additionally, the auto-translator function that is embedded in EPALE currently appears to create confusion amongst users as to what content they are accessing and does not yield optimal results.

**Recommendation 20:** It is recommended that the European Commission maintain the platform multi-lingual.

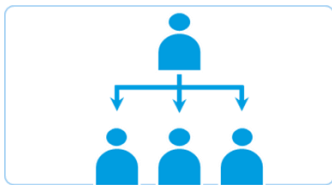
**Recommendation 21:** It is recommended that the CSS seek to improve the auto-translation function of EPALE. This can be achieved by:

- Finding a more optimal technical translation solution or by clarifying on the interface the process of translating content.
- A clarification should be put next to the top corner button with languages stating "Browse EPALE in your language". Moreover, the option for translating the platform should be embedded next to specific content to be translated with a stating "Translate this content in ... (Powered by Google Translate)", rather than being given (as is currently the case) as a general option at the top of the webpage.

**Recommendation 22:** It is recommended the NSSs reach agreements with other countries where the national language is not English to translate the most important content generated in their national language into English and to facilitate its translation to other languages and/or that the NSSs encourage users to post their contributions in both their native language and in English for a wider dissemination.

### **Effectiveness of EPALE (organisational arrangements and monitoring)**

**Conclusion 11:** The current organisational arrangements are very complex and require further delineation of roles and responsibilities.



The **findings** indicate that the contributions from the different actors involved were important and they supported the well-functioning of the platform. Cooperation between actors was said to function well in particular with respect to the European Commission and EACEA. However, the roles of the CSS and NSSs need further clarification as the relationship between the two is not optimal due to the lack of control mechanisms and contractual relationship between the two. Additionally, the role of the ambassadors and their expected contribution was considered to need further clarification in order to ensure that their full potential was exploited. Qualitative data also indicates that financial incentives to ambassadors could lead to attracting more users, but the efficiency analysis does not show a clear correlation between the performance of the platform in a country and the presence or absence of financial incentives for the ambassadors.

**Recommendation 23:** It is recommended the European Commission provide more clarity on the role of the CSS in relation to the NSSs (and vice versa) and that enhanced mechanisms to monitor and verify the activity, effectiveness and impact of the NSSs are put in place to ensure a comparable level of contribution across all countries (e.g. the implementation and further development of the NSS Dashboard).

**Recommendation 24:** It is recommended the European Commission further define the role of Ambassadors and investigate the feasibility of compensating their efforts (e.g. reimbursement of expenses, in-kind or moderate fees, where this is not the case).

## Efficiency of EPALE

**Conclusion 12:** Variations in terms of the efficiency of implementing EPALE in different countries.

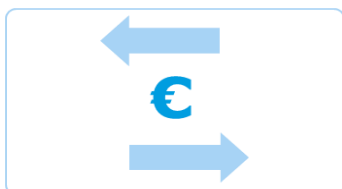


The **findings** indicate that the costs of running EPALE and the efficiency of EPALE (i.e. in terms of attracting registered users within given budgets and benchmarked against the adult population in the country) differ considerably across the different countries implementing EPALE. On average, the cost for each registered *user* of EPALE was 669 EUR (the costs range considerably from approximately 2,400 EUR / registered user to 274 EUR / registered user), while the average monthly cost for each unique *visitor* of EPALE was 12.5 EUR. However, the findings suggest no clear correlation between the volume of adult population or the number of registered users in a country and the relative costs incurred, or between the use (or not) of ambassadors and the number of registered users in a country. Contextual factors such as the ability to engage users in EU funded activities or the level of pro-activeness of the NSSs and ambassadors are found to be important in attracting and engaging users but the evidence suggests a mixed picture when it comes to the impact of the location of the NSSs within a specific organisation or their additional roles (e.g. National Coordinators of the EAAL Agenda, Erasmus+ National Agencies) on their level of efficiency. Additionally, no clear correlation was established between the level of

market penetration of EPALE and some factors related to the characteristics of the population of users, such as level of digital literacy.

**Recommendation 25:** It is recommended that a systematic assessment of the activities undertaken by the NSSs in each/a sample of countries be made to ascertain whether there are any patterns in user/visitor numbers that can be explained by the existence or not of given activities (e.g. organisation of conferences / events that promote EPALE). The present study has looked into whether the existence or not of ambassadors and the dual role of the NSSs or their location within an organisation has an effect on the performance of the platform, but this analysis can be expanded upon as recommended.

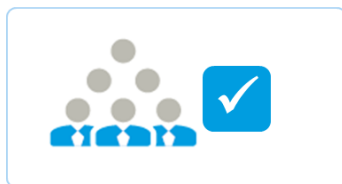
**Conclusion 13:** At this early stage in EPALE's implementation, it is unclear whether the costs of running EPALE are commensurate with the benefits of the platform.



The **findings** suggest that the platform has made progress in attaining its objectives, but the impact is limited due to the (still) low number of users and the concentration of interactions within a small core group. The main short-term benefits of EPALE include access to information on adult learning practices, events and potential partners in the field whereas the main long-term benefits signalled by stakeholders were related to the professionalization of the adult education sector and increasing the competencies of adult educators across the countries. Given that the benefits of EPALE are immaterial and cannot be judged in monetary terms, it is not possible to judge whether the costs are commensurate with the benefits of the platform.

**Recommendation 26:** It is recommended that the CSS and NSS conduct a systematisation of good practices collected of NSS from countries where the implementation of EPALE appears to be efficient in monetary terms and in terms of attracting registered users. The output of this should be considered as action points to be applied by NSSs in other countries in order to achieve a comparable level of efficiency. This recommendation can be an integral part of Recommendation 25.

**Conclusion 14:** The value added of the NSSs with respect to ensuring an efficient implementation of EPALE is clear, but the level of their engagement varies.



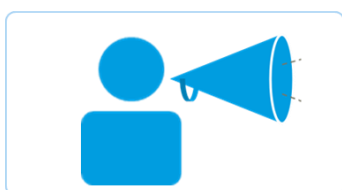
The **findings** suggest that the NSS network is crucial for the success of EPALE. The pro-activeness of the NSS is important in engaging users to utilise the platform, though differences in the level of engagement across countries have been reported.

**Recommendation 27:** It is recommended that the network of NSSs be maintained and that it be adequately supported both economically, technically and with advice to achieve the objectives of EPALE.

See also **Recommendation 23** where it is recommended that the EACEA and the European Commission further clarify the responsibilities of the NSS (in relation to the implementation of the platform but also in respect to the collaboration with other actors such as the CSS) and that more monitoring and control mechanisms be put in place to ensure a uniform level of engagement across all NSSs.

## Coherence of EPALE

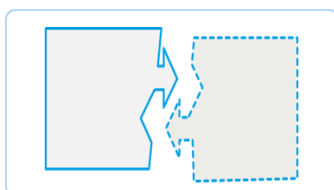
**Conclusion 15:** EPALE has supported the dissemination of European programmes and activities in the field of adult education and training, but predominantly those of the Erasmus+ Programme.



The **findings** show that EPALE has been pivotal in supporting the dissemination of information about other EU programmes but there seems to be a bias towards presenting results and information concerning the Erasmus+ Programme. The information disseminated about Erasmus+ via EPALE was found to be useful by stakeholders but further efforts are needed to disseminate information and results of other EU programmes (e.g. projects financed under the ESF or other financial instruments) and national programmes and projects, thereby increasing their visibility.

**Recommendation 28:** It is recommended the CSS and NSS incentivise further the dissemination of results of projects funded by other European and national programmes, including but not limited to Erasmus+. This can be done for example by building a repository of links to other websites where information about projects funded by other programmes (European or national) can be found.

**Conclusion 16:** The EPALE initiative is unique in Europe and overlaps only to a minor extent with other national initiatives in the field.



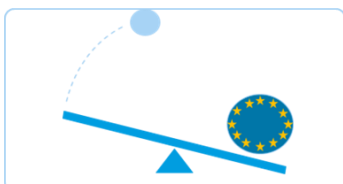
The **findings** show that no other similar initiatives or platforms exist at EU level and the few national platforms that exist and have similar objectives to EPALE only overlap with EPALE to a limited extent when it comes to certain information published in both places. However, EPALE's pan-European and multi-lingual aspects are not matched by any other initiatives and are positively assessed by the majority of consulted stakeholders. As such, EPALE could benefit from building synergies with other platforms and capitalising on their potential.

**Recommendation 29:** It is recommended that the NSSs further seek to build synergies of EPALE with other platforms and social media networks to avoid duplication of efforts. For example, the NSSs should screen the content available on EPALE and when duplication of information is identified, the content on EPALE could

be replaced / complemented with a link to those other sources. This could also have positive effects in streamlining of content on EPALE.

## Added value of EPALE

**Conclusion 17:** EPALE brings added value to the field of adult education and training.



The **findings** suggest that EPALE is a one-of-a-kind platform at EU level and its contribution to the field of adult learning is unique. The most important added value of EPALE is related to the fact that it is a multi-lingual and a 'one-stop-shop', i.e. an open source of information with a strong pan-European dimension that supports the networking and exchange of information, expertise and good practices across the borders between stakeholders active in the field of adult learning provision. However, further efforts can be made to increase its added value.

**Recommendation 30:** It is recommended that action be taken to increase the added value of EPALE, in particular by implementing:

- **Recommendation 3, 4, and 9** which relate to increasing the personalisation of content to specific target audiences and incentivising sharing of content by setting up rating systems for content quality (likes, dislikes, comments and ratings etc.).
- **Recommendation 7 and 10** on enhancing activity of users on the platform by offering online courses and webinars moderated by key experts in the field that would allow users to exchange ideas but also receive validation on their approaches in practicing adult education and training.
- **Recommendations 13, 14, 18 and 19** which relate to enhancing the user experience by streamlining the content and making the browsing of the platform more user-friendly, enhancing the appearance of the platform and its performance.
- Further developing the monthly focus topics (e.g. make them last for two months and go into more depth).

**Conclusion 18:** A discontinuation of EPALE would have negative impacts.



The **findings** show that a potential discontinuation of the platform was not desirable. A discontinuation of the platform is not advisable as it would mean both financial losses (i.e. a loss of investments made so far in setting up and running the platform) and material losses (i.e. loss of information, loss of opportunities to build networks and cooperation etc.).

**Recommendation 31:** It is recommended that the platform be maintained and investments in the project be sustained.

Evidence shows that EPALE has both strengths and weaknesses. However, if the risks related to the performance of the platform are mitigated and opportunities for improvement are explored, EPALE's appeal to the users and its relevance will likely increase (see the figure below for the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats).

**Figure 1: Overview of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats**

