EPALE User Survey 2020 Analysis Report

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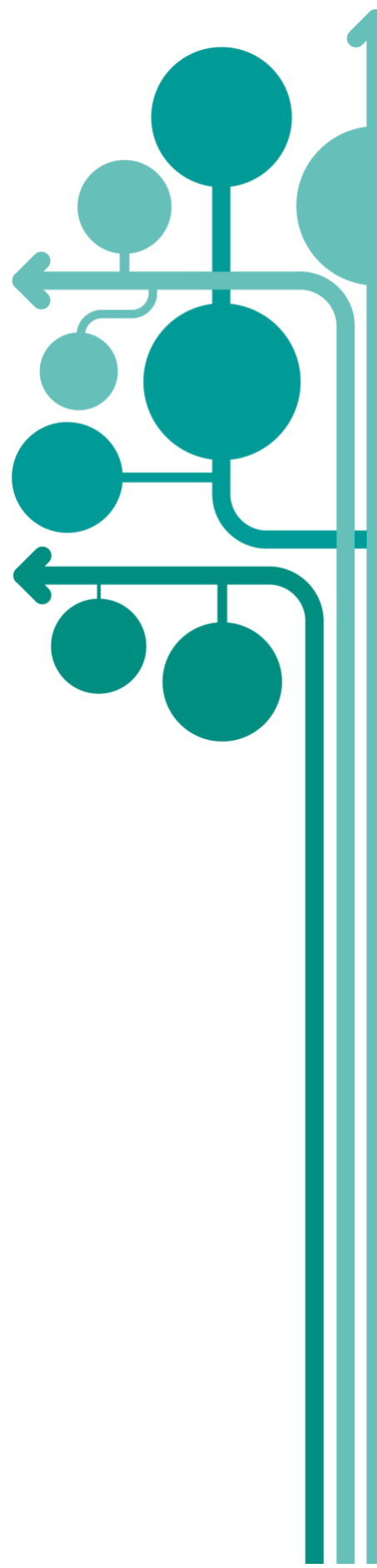
Contents

1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of the EPALE 2020 survey, which is the fifth annual user survey run by the Central Support Service (CSS). In comparison to previous years the survey was renewed and simplified in order to both update the relevance of the questions and increasing the users' participation. The survey was launched in 32 languages and carried out in the period from 12 January to 1 February 2021.

The survey explored five main areas:

- **User demographics** (professional role and country of origin)

- **User awareness and fidelity** (routes for finding out about the website, usage frequency, awareness and appreciation of latest contents)

- **User motivations and needs** (reasons for visiting EPALE, satisfaction with the website features, improvements needed)

- **User experience** (relevance of themes, interaction with the community, familiarity with and usability of the website features)

- **Accessibility in different languages**

The survey was disseminated via the EPALE website, social media channels and newsletters and through key stakeholders including the 37 EPALE National Support Services (NSS). As a result, **990 responses** were received in total, which represents an **increase of 32% in comparison to responses achieved in 2019** and +29% compared to 2018.

2 Summary of Key Findings

Main highlights of the 2020 Survey include the following:

- **Events are the most popular route** among the survey respondents for finding out about the platform (29%), the same percentage as reported in the 2019. **The second most popular route was through social media** (24%), showing a 11% increase in comparison to 2019.

- **81% of EPALE users** involved in the survey **used the platform at least on a monthly basis**, almost the same percentage as reported in the 2019 survey.

- In terms of awareness about EPALE most recent contents, **users that were aware of the new initiatives launched in 2020 ranged between 60%-75%**, depending on each specific initiative. **Serial initiatives** that lasted throughout the year, such as EPALE interviews (75%), Resource kits (70%) and Community Stories (70%), were the ones that reached the highest number of respondents. In terms of appreciation, **between 93%-96%** of the respondents that were aware of the 2020 initiatives **rated them as useful or very useful**.
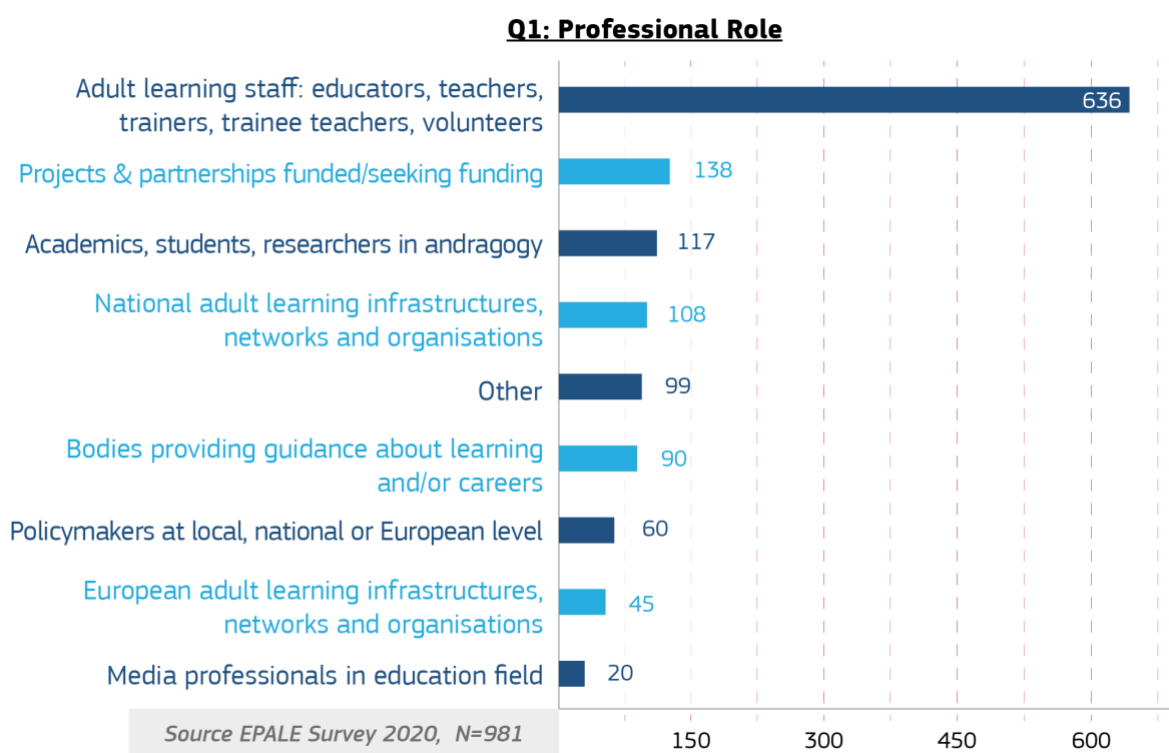
- The three main reasons selected by survey respondents for visiting the site were the same as in 2019 and 2018: **finding practical information** relevant to their job (53%), **latest sector news** (45%) and **information about sector events** (40%).

- The survey shows that **EPALE users are largely satisfied with the different features of the platform** and that, compared to previous years, **the users' satisfaction increased regarding all the features**. Finding information relevant to their needs continues to be a feedback point for many respondents with the 2020 survey, showing that 34% of users considers that this feature requires improvements.

- When we asked the respondents what would **encourage** them to use EPALE more often, the most frequent factors were:

    o **More information in their language** (38%)

    o **Easier website navigation** (36%)

    o **Improved search function** (32%)

    o **Supports and tutorials** for uploading contents and using the website (30%)

- **Over half** (57%) **of EPALE users** involved in the survey **browsed the site without logging in**. 39% were not clear on the benefits of logging in and a further third (32%) felt that they did not have to do so (20%).

- Overall, **the vast majority** (97%) **of EPALE users** involved in the survey felt that **the themes on the platform were appropriate and relevant.**

- **A total of 52% of EPALE users** who responded to the survey reported that they **had interacted with other EPALE community members** through online discussion, Communities of Practice, commenting on blog posts, looking for partner search requests or by finding project partners. **This figure is consistently higher** (+12%) **than the ones from 2019 and 2018**.

- In respect to the user experience of different EPALE features, **finding relevant contents** such as blog posts, news articles, resources and events (94%), **logging in** to the website (86%) and **finding professional upskilling opportunities** such as courses, MOOCs and OERs (64%) **are the features with which the respondents are more familiar**. On the other hand, the familiarity with the other features ranged between 48%-54%.

- In terms of usability, **the features more easily used** are **logging in to the website** (82%), **participating in online discussion** (79%) and **finding relevant contents** (76%). The other features rated as "easy" ranged between 64%-67%. Creating a partner request with the partner search tool seems the feature with which the respondents struggled the most (familiarity 43% and usability 56%).

- There were generally **high levels of satisfaction with the quantity** (84%) **and quality** (91%) **of the content in different language versions** of EPALE.
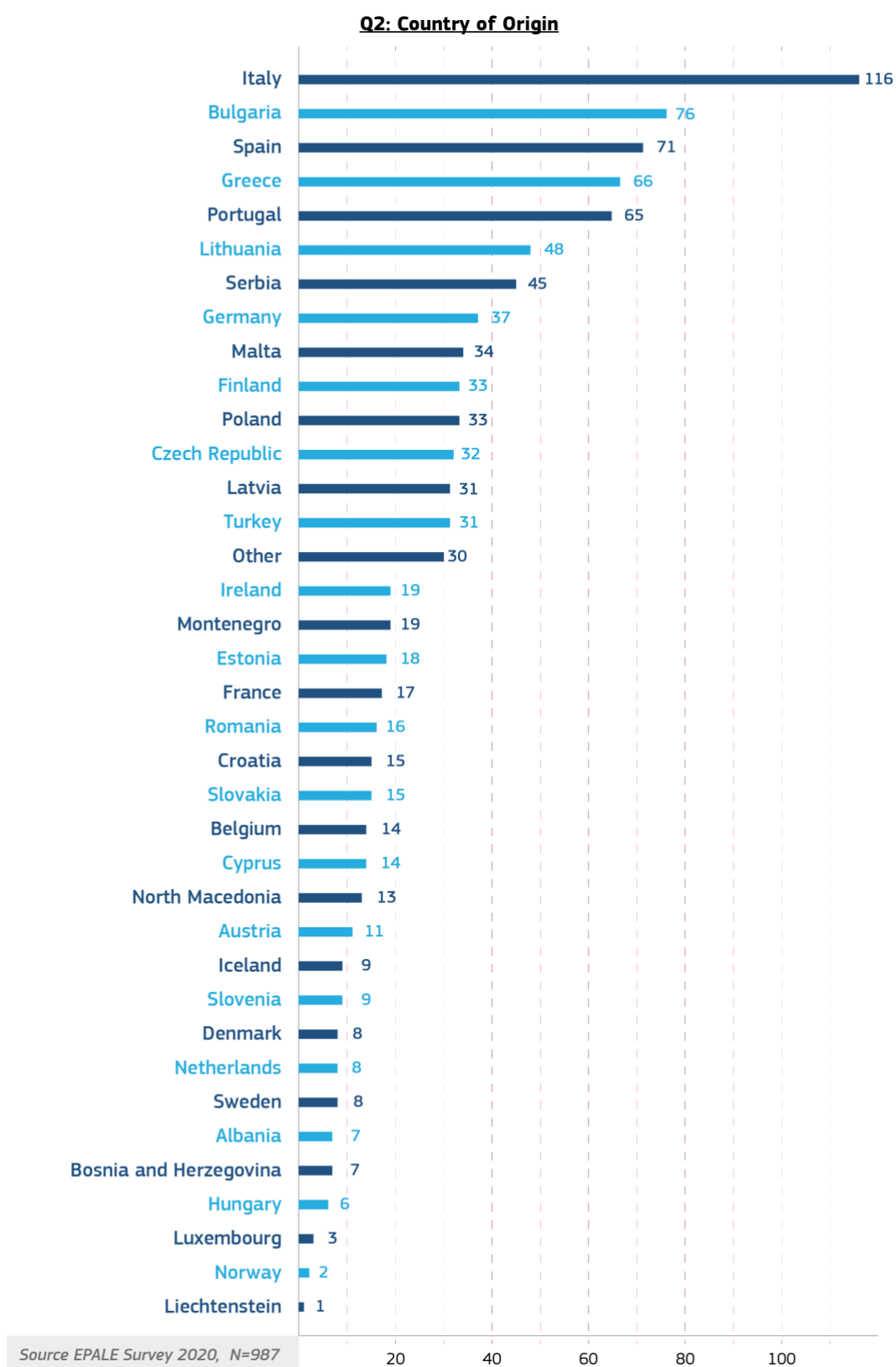
3 Key Findings

3.1 Demographics

A high proportion (65%, 636) of the EPALE users involved in the survey were **Adult learning staff** (educators, teachers, trainers etc.). **Project partnerships** accounted for 14% (138), with a further 12% (117) reporting they were **academics, students and researchers**. Responses from other EPALE target groups were slightly lower and ranged between 2-11% of the overall achieved sample (Figure 1). **This is a less dispersed profile to the survey respondents in 2019**, where 54% were adult learning staff and the responses from the other target groups ranged between 3-15%.

Figure 1 – EPALE Users by professional role

Q1: Professional Role

Professional Role	Count
Adult learning staff: educators, teachers, trainers, trainee teachers, volunteers	636
Projects & partnerships funded/seeking funding	138
Academics, students, researchers in andragogy	117
National adult learning infrastructures, networks and organisations	108
Other	99
Bodies providing guidance about learning and/or careers	90
Policymakers at local, national or European level	60
European adult learning infrastructures, networks and organisations	45
Media professionals in education field	20

Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=981

One eight (12%, 116) of the survey responses were from Italy (Figure 2). This is a smaller figure than 2019 (19%) and 2018 (18%), meaning that Italy remains the most common country of origin but **the survey reached a more geographical balance overall**. The other largest groups of responses were from Bulgaria (7.7 %, 76), Spain (7.2%, 71), Greece (6.7%, 66) and Portugal (6.6%, 65).
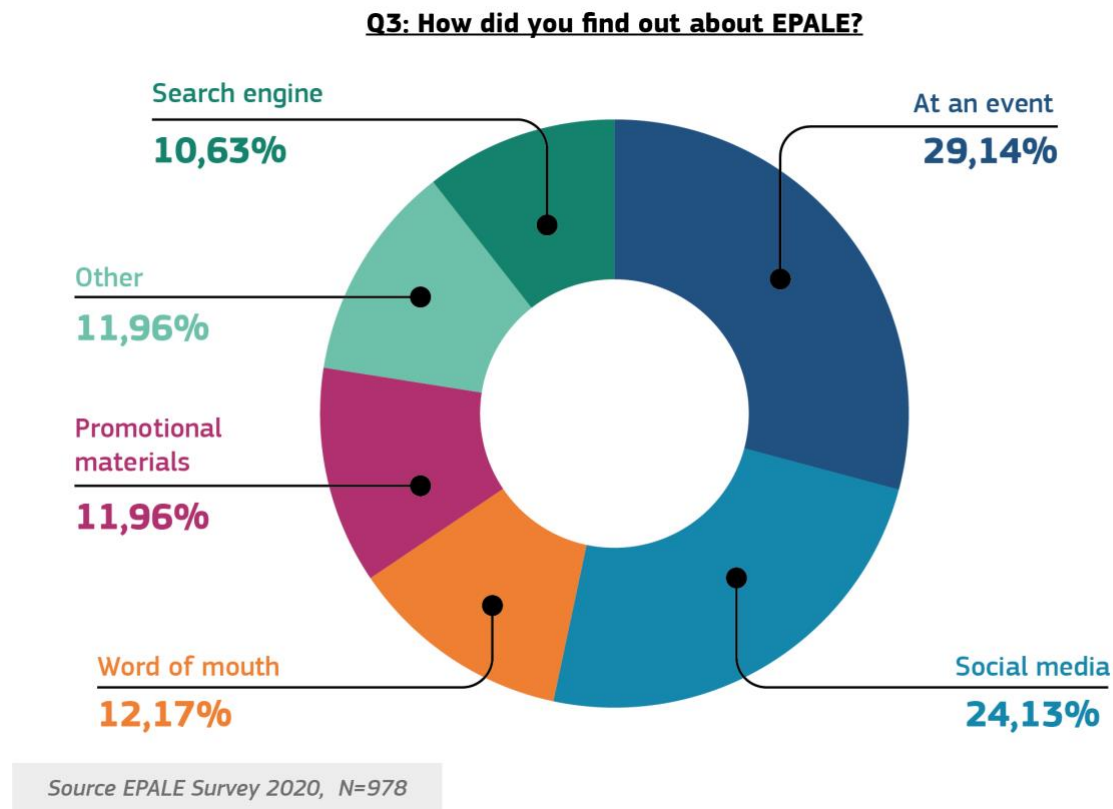
Figure 2 – Responses by country of origin

Q2: Country of Origin

Country	Responses
Italy	116
Bulgaria	76
Spain	71
Greece	66
Portugal	65
Lithuania	48
Serbia	45
Germany	37
Malta	34
Finland	33
Poland	33
Czech Republic	32
Latvia	31
Turkey	31
Other	30
Ireland	19
Montenegro	19
Estonia	18
France	17
Romania	16
Croatia	15
Slovakia	15
Belgium	14
Cyprus	14
North Macedonia	13
Austria	11
Iceland	9
Slovenia	9
Denmark	8
Netherlands	8
Sweden	8
Albania	7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	7
Hungary	6
Luxembourg	3
Norway	2
Liechtenstein	1

Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=987
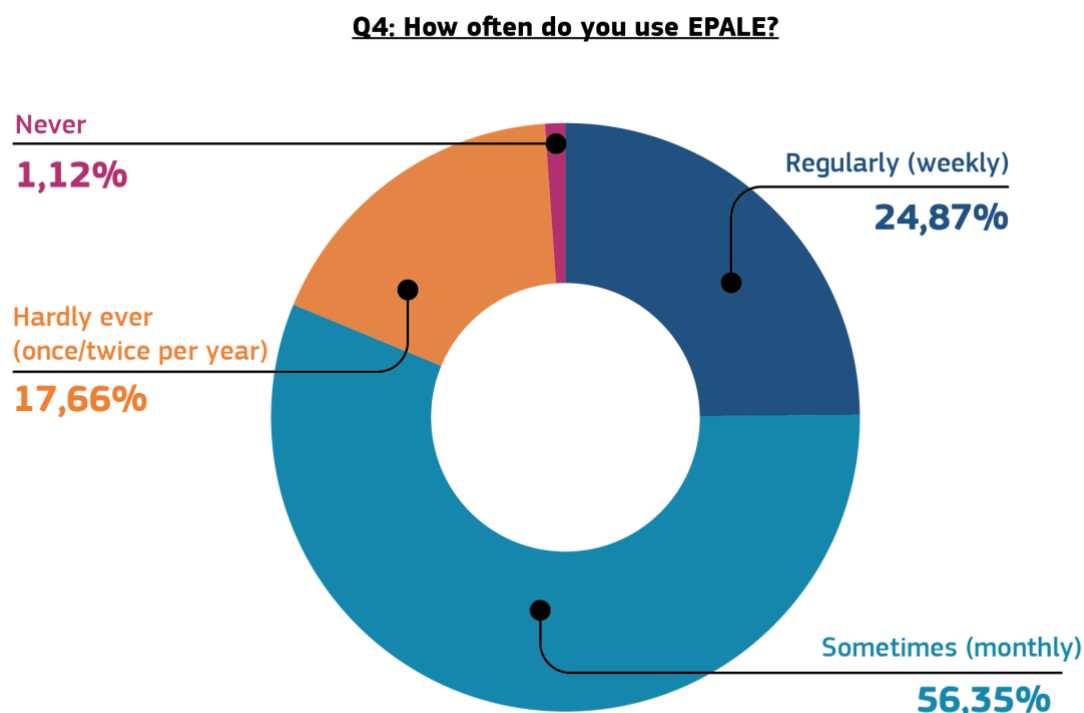
3.2 User Awareness and Fidelity

Well over a quarter (29%, 285) of survey respondents **found out about the platform at an event**, the same percentage as reported in the 2019. The second most popular route was through **social media** (24%, 236), showing a 11% increase in comparison to 2019 (13%). Other routes were lower and ranged between 10-12% (Figure 3).

Figure 3 How users found out about EPALE

Q3: How did you find out about EPALE?

Search engine
10,63%

At an event
29,14%

Other
11,96%

Promotional materials
11,96%

Word of mouth
12,17%

Social media
24,13%

Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=978

81% (800) of EPALE users involved in the survey (Figure 4**) used the platform at least on a monthly basis** (56% monthly and 25% weekly), almost the same percentage as reported in the 2019 survey (82%).

Figure 4 – How often respondents use EPALE

Q4: How often do you use EPALE?

Never
1,12%

Hardly ever
(once/twice per year)
17,66%

Regularly (weekly)
24,87%

Sometimes (monthly)
56,35%

Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=985

In order to further analyse the user **awareness and fidelity on EPALE most recent initiatives**, we asked the EPALE users involved in the survey if they were aware of the initiatives launched in 2020 and if they found them useful (Figure 5).

In terms of awareness, **users that were aware of these initiatives ranged between 60%-75%,** depending on each specific initiative. **Serial initiatives** that lasted throughout the year, such as EPALE interviews (75%, 711), Resource kits (70%, 663) and Community Stories (70%, 658), were the ones that reached the highest number of respondents. The COVID-19 Banner (65%, 604) and the EPALE Community Conference (60%, 556) reached less users, but this is related to the fact that the promotion of these initiatives lasted just a few months.

In terms of appreciation, users that stated that these initiatives were not useful ranged between 3-5%, depending on each specific initiative. This means that, narrowing the results only to the respondents that were aware of the 2020 initiatives, **between 93%-96% of the users rated the initiatives as useful or very useful**.

Figure 5 – Awareness and appreciation of 2020 Initiatives

Q15: How would you rate the following EPALE initiatives in 2020?
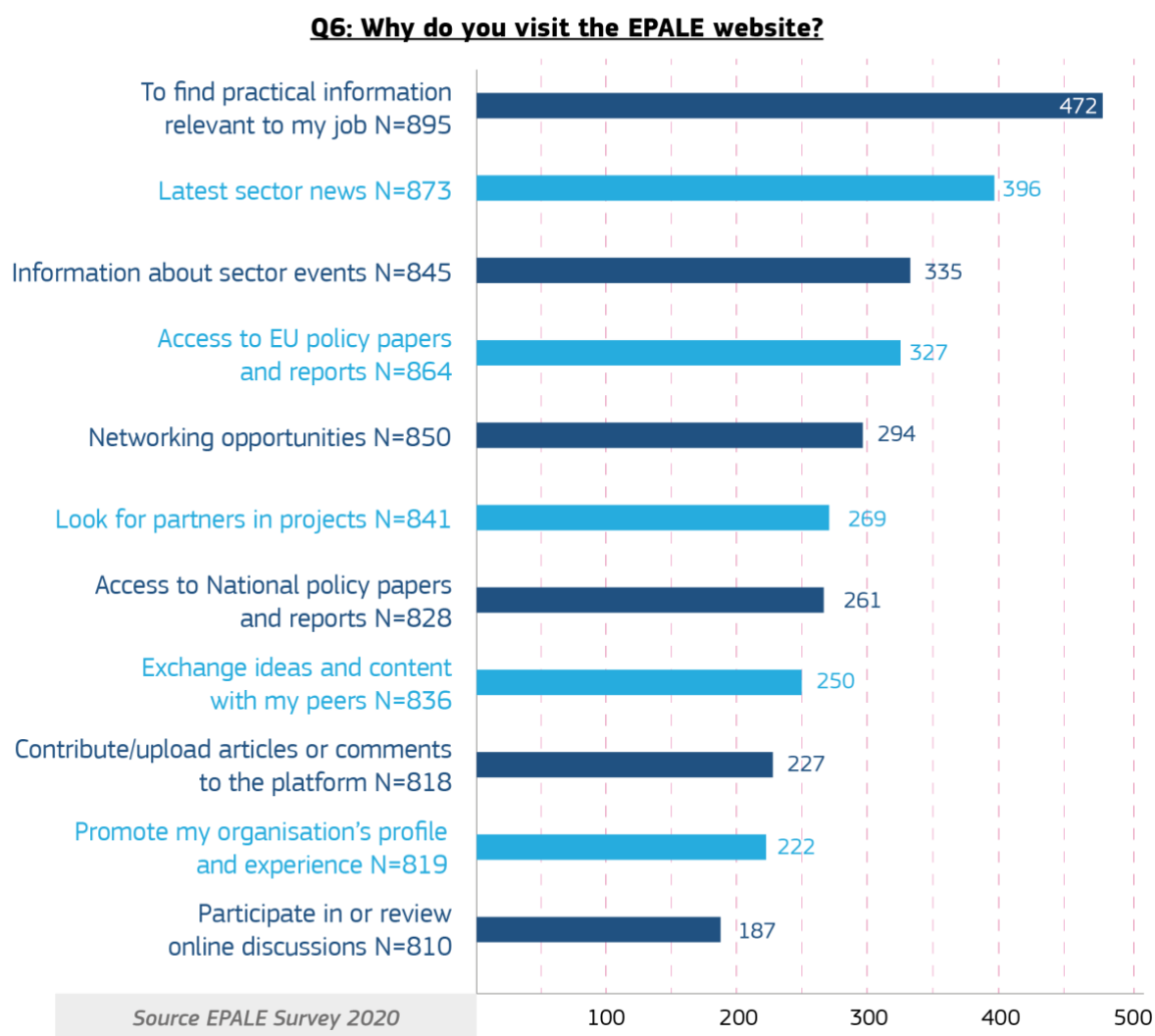
Source EPALE Survey 2020
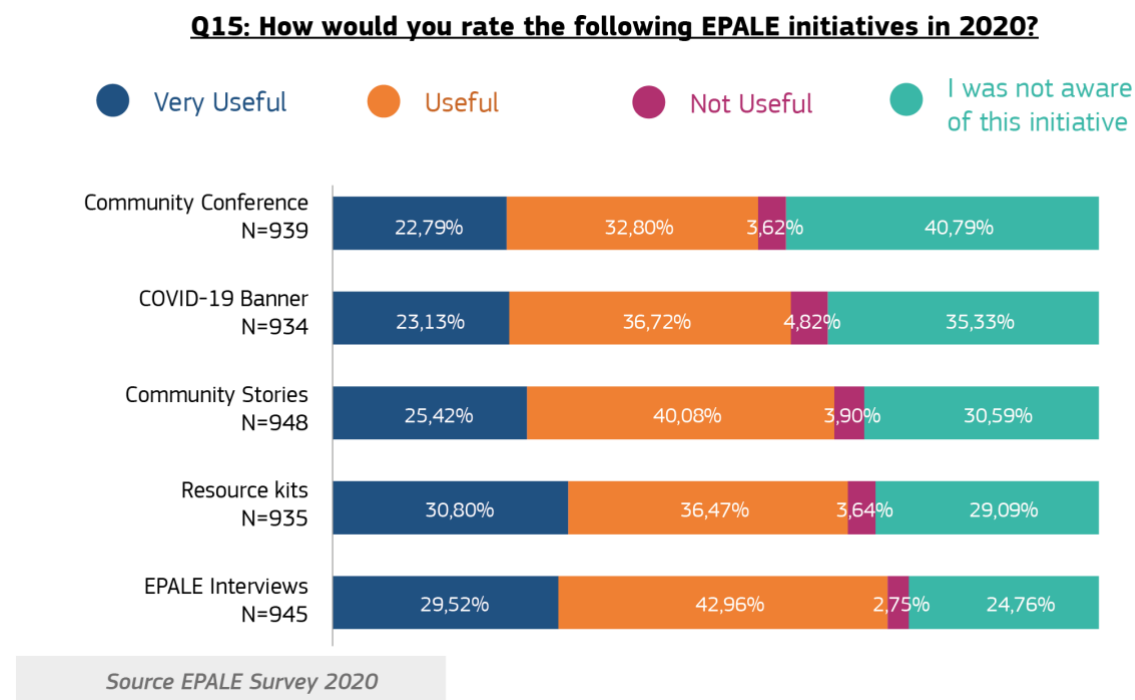
3.3 User Motivations and Needs

The three **main reasons** selected by survey respondents **for visiting the site** were the same as in 2019 and 2018:

- **Finding practical information relevant to their job** – just above half (53%, 472)

- **Latest sector news** – 45% (396)

- **Information about sector events** – 40% (335)

In addition, just over a third said they use the site mainly to access EU policy papers (38%, 327) and for networking opportunities (35%, 294). A slightly lower proportion reported that they visit the site to look for project partners (32%, 269), to access National policy papers (31%, 261) and for exchanging ideas and content with their peers (30%, 250). These figures are generally consistent with the findings from the 2019 and 2018 surveys.

Figure 6 – Main reasons for visiting EPALE

Q6: Why do you visit the EPALE website?

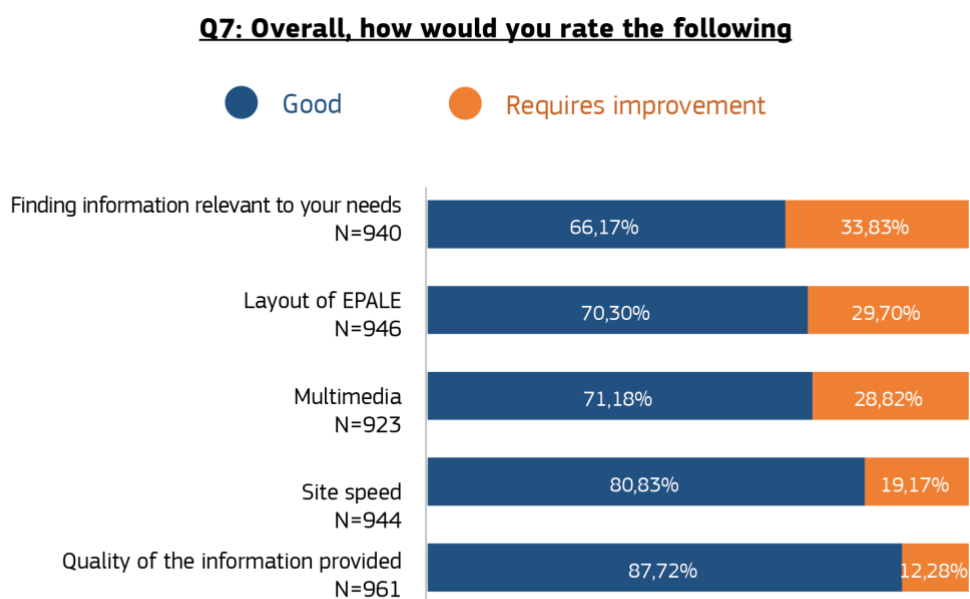| Reason	Value
To find practical information relevant to my job N=895	472
Latest sector news N=873	396
Information about sector events N=845	335
Access to EU policy papers and reports N=864	327
Networking opportunities N=850	294
Look for partners in projects N=841	269
Access to National policy papers and reports N=828	261
Exchange ideas and content with my peers N=836	250
Contribute/upload articles or comments to the platform N=818	227
Promote my organisation's profile and experience N=819	222
Participate in or review online discussions N=810	187

Source EPALE Survey 2020

The survey shows that **EPALE users are largely satisfied with the different features of the platform** (Figure 7) and that, compared to previous years, **the users' satisfaction increased regarding all the features**. In details:

- 88% (843) of the users involved in the survey rated the **quality of information** provided as "good": a figure even bigger than those from 2019 (83%) and 2018 (81%), when this area was already at the first place among the most popular ones.

- Around four fifths of respondents (81%, 763) rated the **site speed** as "good", marking a 20% increase in comparison the figures reported in 2019 and 2018 surveys.

- 71% of the respondents rated **multimedia elements** as "good", marking a 10% increase in comparison the figures reported in 2019 and 2018 surveys.

- 70% of the respondents rated the **layout of the site** as "good", marking a 13% increase in comparison the figures reported in 2019 and 2018 surveys.

- **Finding information relevant to their needs** continues to be a feedback point for many respondents with the 2020 survey, showing that 66% of users rated this feature as "good" and 34% of users considers that this feature requires improvements. In any case users that rated this feature as good increased of 7% in comparison to the figure reported in 2018 survey. The migration of the website on Drupal 8 planned for the second half of March featuring a general re-organization of content and an improved search functionality should facilitate the users in finding relevant information on the website.

Figure 7 – Rating of EPALE features

Q7: Overall, how would you rate the following

● Good   ● Requires improvement

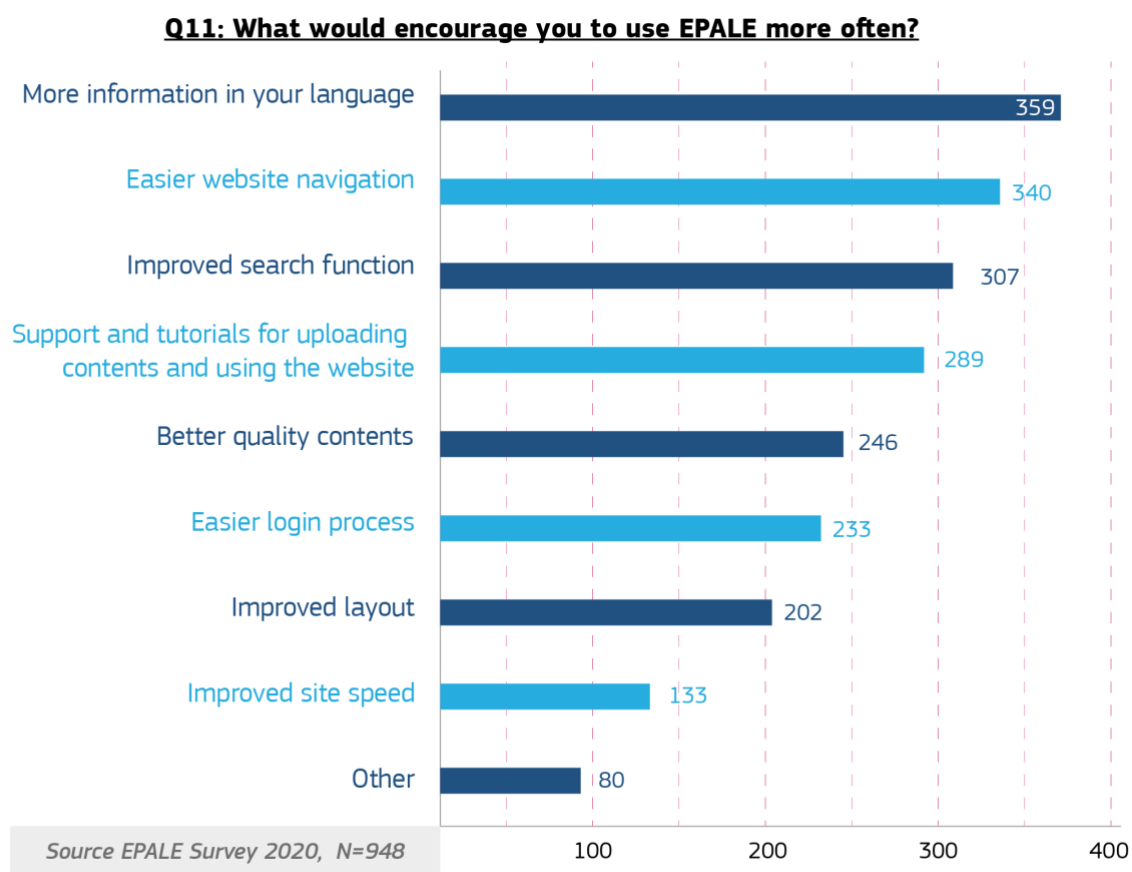| Feature	Good	Requires improvement
Finding information relevant to your needs N=940	66,17%	33,83%
Layout of EPALE N=946	70,30%	29,70%
Multimedia N=923	71,18%	28,82%
Site speed N=944	80,83%	19,17%
Quality of the information provided N=961	87,72%	12,28%

Source EPALE Survey 2020

When we asked the respondents **what would encourage them to use EPALE more often**, the most frequent factors were:

- **More information in their language** (38%, 359)

- **Easier website navigation** (36%, 340)

- **Improved search function** (32%, 307)

- **Supports and tutorials** for uploading contents and using the website (30%, 289)

These feedback points are quite in line with findings of the 2019 survey.

Figure 8 – Factors that would encourage users to visit and contribute to EPALE more often

Q11: What would encourage you to use EPALE more often?

Factor	Value
More information in your language	359
Easier website navigation	340
Improved search function	307
Support and tutorials for uploading contents and using the website	289
Better quality contents	246
Easier login process	233
Improved layout	202
Improved site speed	133
Other	80

Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=948

3.4 User Experience

Over half (57%, 555) of EPALE users involved in the survey **browsed the site without logging in** (Figure 9). This percentage is very similar to the ones reported in the 2019 survey (55%) and in the 2018 survey (59%).

The reasons provided by survey respondents for not logging in varied (Figure 10). 39% (210) were **not clear on the benefits of logging** in and a further third (32%, 172) felt that **they did not have to do so**. 20% (108) had forgotten their log in details, whilst a minority (11%, 59) said they found it difficult to log in. This data is comparable with the findings from the surveys undertaken in 2019 and 2018.

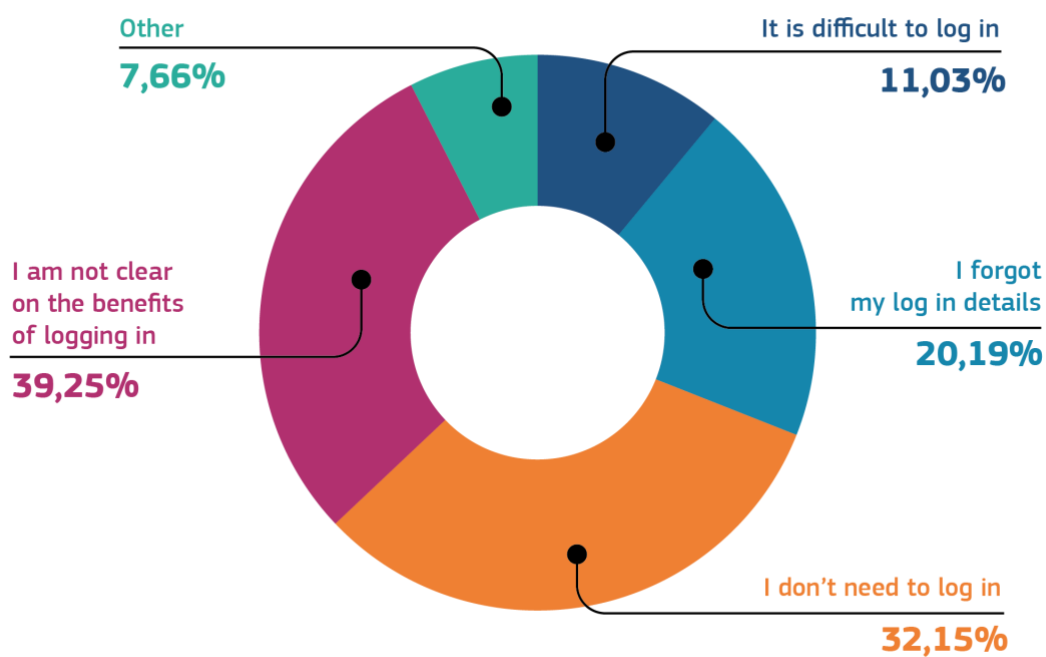**Figure 9 – Users who browse the site without logging in**

Q5: Do you browse the site without logging in?

Yes
56,86%

No
43,14%
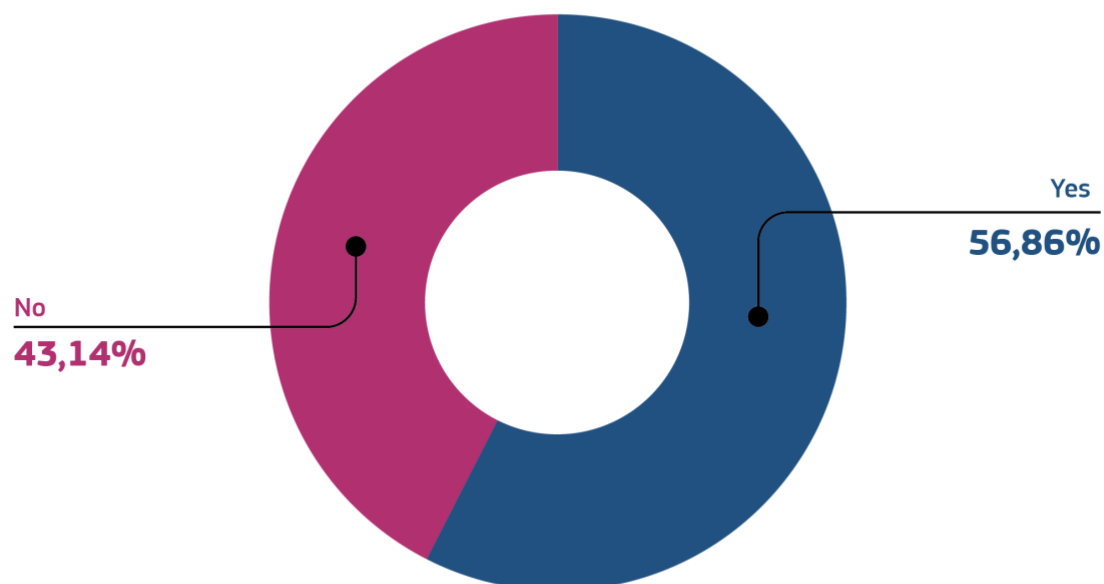
Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=976

Figure 10 – Factors that prevent users from logging in

Q 5.1: What prevents you from logging in?

Other
**7,66%**

It is difficult to log in
11,03%

I am not clear
on the benefits
of logging in
39,25%

I forgot
my log in details
20,19%

I don't need to log in
32,15%

Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=535

Overall, **the vast majority** (97%, 936) of EPALE users involved in the survey felt that **the themes on the platform were appropriate and relevant** (Figure 11). This is a slightly higher proportion than in 2019 and 2018 (96%).

The few respondents who did not feel that the EPALE themes were appropriate and relevant were asked why not. As happened in 2019, the general theme of the responses was that the content was too general and that the platform does not allow users to easily search for specific content.

Figure 11 – Relevance of EPALE Themes

Q 8: Are the EPALE themes appropriate and relevant?


No
3%

Yes
97%
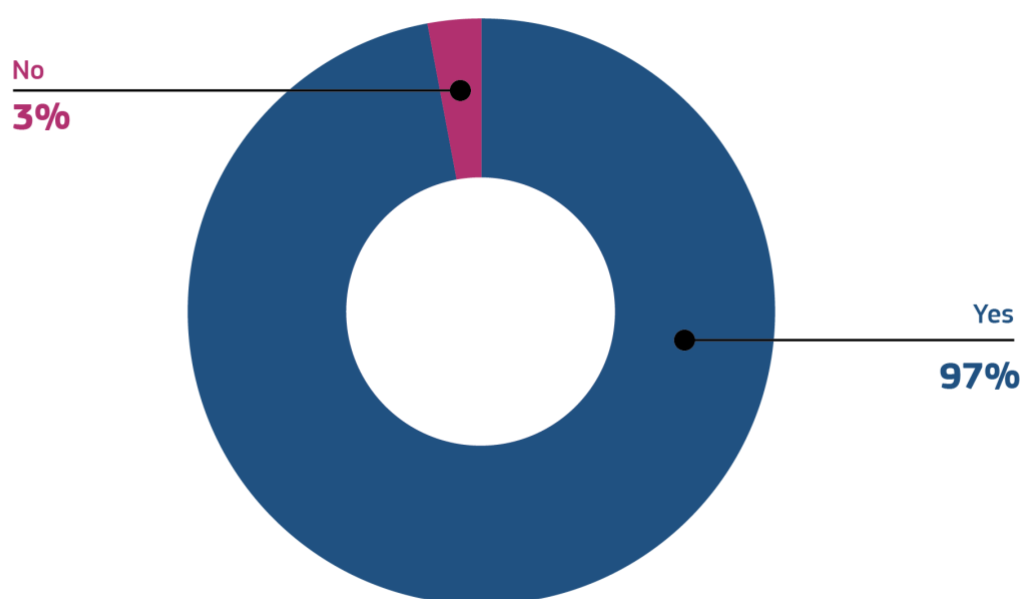
Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=965

A total of **52%** (505) of EPALE users who responded to the survey reported that they **had interacted with other EPALE community members** through online discussion, Communities of Practice, commenting on blog posts, looking for partner search requests or by finding project partners. **This figure is consistently higher** (+12%) **than the ones from 2019 and 2018** (40% both years).

The respondents who did not interacted with other EPALE members were asked why not. The general themes among the 295 responses were the **lack of time** (29%, 85) and **the lack of need/interest** (21%, 63). A smaller proportion of the respondents mentioned the lack of awareness about the interactive features (7%, 22), the lack of relevant topics (7%, 21), technical difficulties (5%, 16) and language barriers (5%, 15).

Figure 12 – Interactions with the community

Q9: Have you ever interacted with other EPALE community members?

No
48,15%
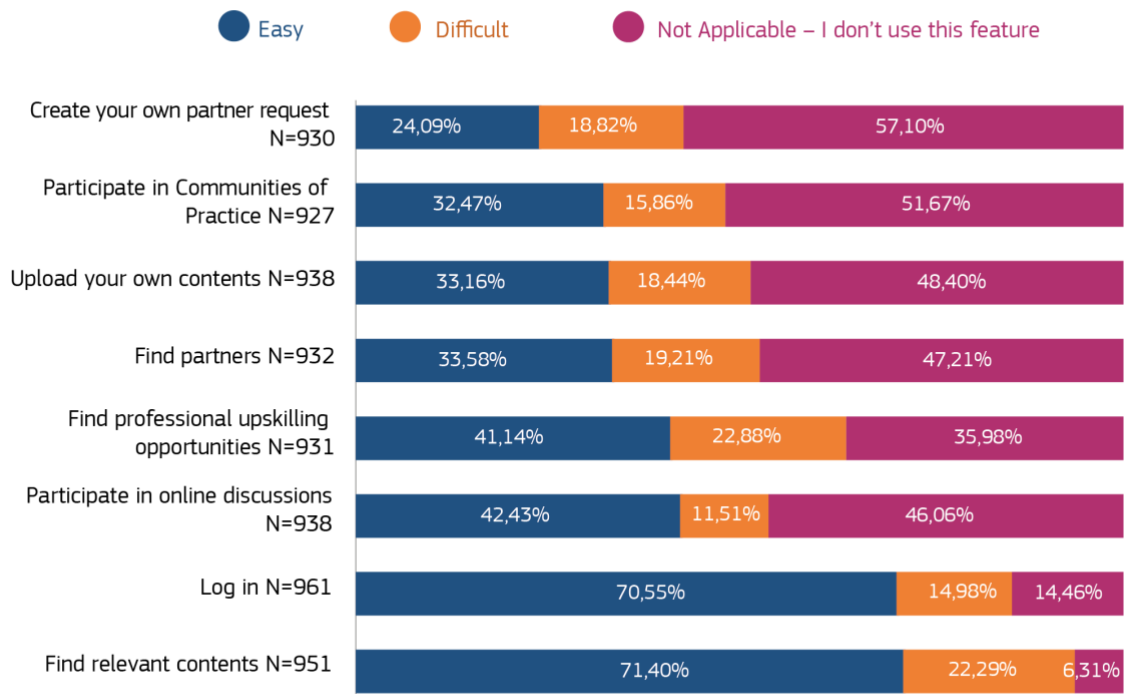
Yes
51,85%
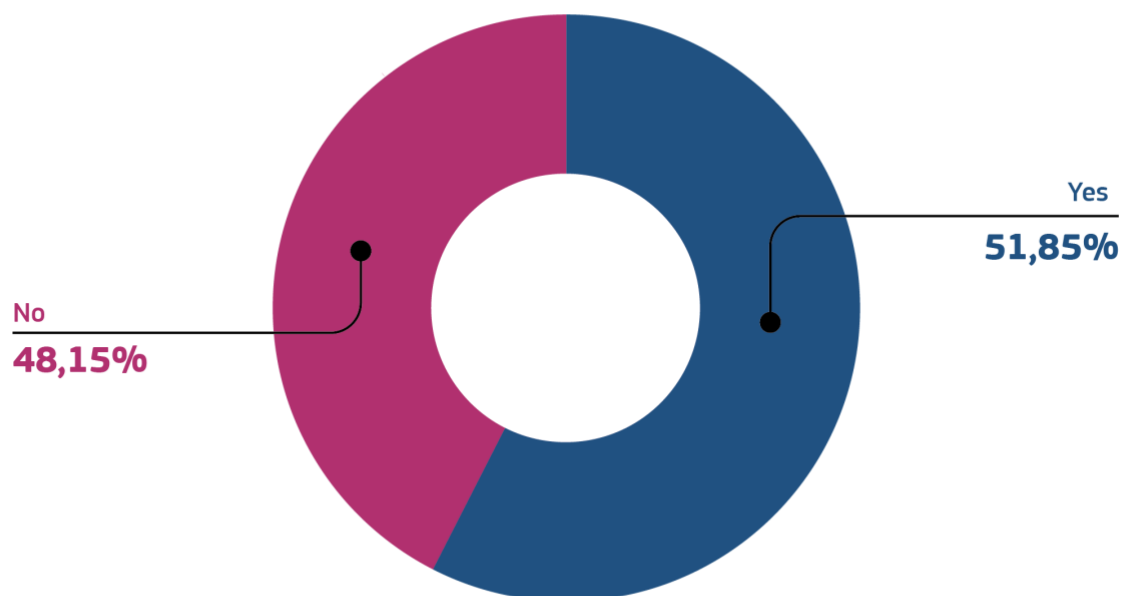
Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=974

In respect to the **user experience of different EPALE features** (Figure 13), **finding relevant contents** such as blog posts, news articles, resources and events (94%), **logging in to the website** (86%) and **finding professional upskilling opportunities** such as courses, MOOCs and OERs (64%) are **the features with which the respondents were more familiar**. On the other hand, the familiarity with the other features ranged between 48%-54%. In terms of **usability**, the **features more easily used** are **logging in** to the website (82%), **participating in online discussion** (79%) and **finding relevant contents** (76%). The other features rated as "easy" ranged between 64%-67%. **Creating a partner request** with the partner search tool seems the feature the respondents struggled the most (familiarity 43% and usability 56%). In details:

- 94% (891) of the respondents used the website for finding relevant contents (such as blog posts, news articles, resources and events). 76% (679) of them found it easy.

- 86% (822) of the respondents logged in to the website. 82% (678) of them found it easy,

- 64% (596) of the respondents used the website for finding professional upskilling opportunities such as courses, MOOCs and OERs. 64% (383) of them found it easy.

- 54% (506) of the respondents participated in online discussions. 79% (398) of them found it easy.

- 53% (492) of the respondents used the website for finding partners with the Partner Search Tool. 64% (313) of them found it easy.

- 52% (484) of the respondents used the website for uploading their own contents (such as blog posts, news articles, resources and events). 64% (311) of them found it easy.

- 48% (448) of the respondents participated in Communities of Practice. 67% (301) of them found it easy.

- 43% (399) of the respondents created their own partner request with the Partner Search Tool. 56% (224) of them found it easy.

Figure 13 – User experience of the website features

Q10: Rate how easily you are able to carry out the following activities

Easy   Difficult   Not Applicable – I don't use this feature

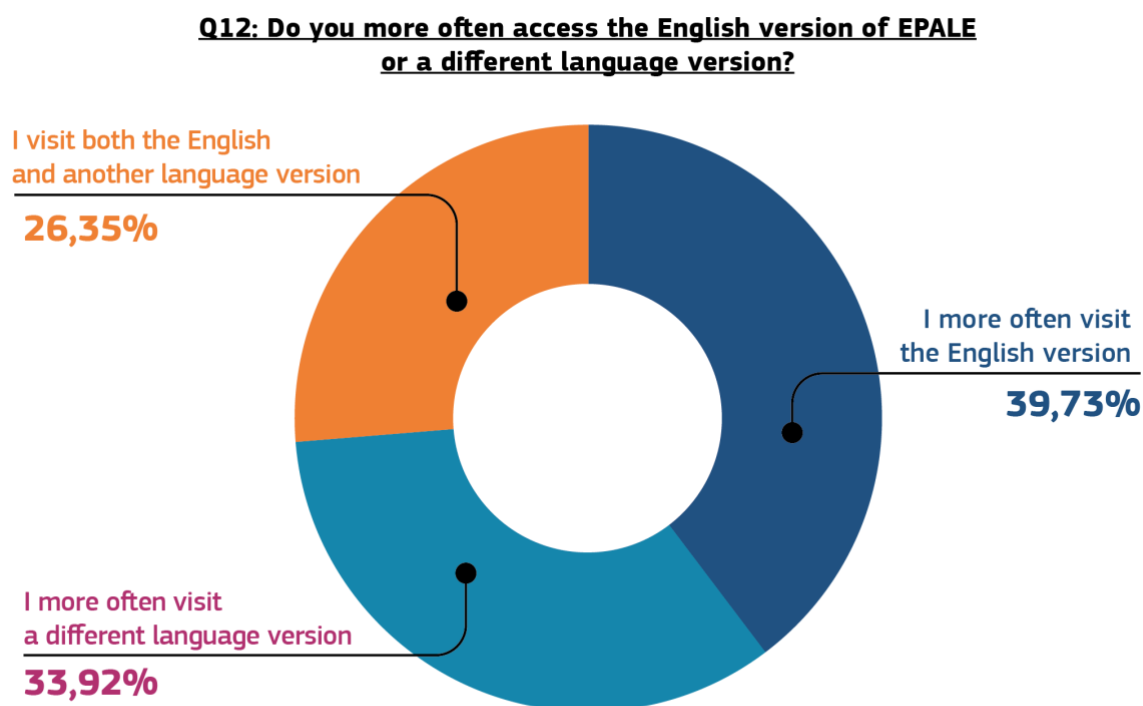|	Easy	Difficult	Not Applicable
Create your own partner request N=930	24,09%	18,82%	57,10%
Participate in Communities of Practice N=927	32,47%	15,86%	51,67%
Upload your own contents N=938	33,16%	18,44%	48,40%
Find partners N=932	33,58%	19,21%	47,21%
Find professional upskilling opportunities N=931	41,14%	22,88%	35,98%
Participate in online discussions N=938	42,43%	11,51%	46,06%
Log in N=961	70,55%	14,98%	14,46%
Find relevant contents N=951	71,40%	22,29%	6,31%

Source EPALE Survey 2020

3.5 Accessibility in different languages

Two fifth of the survey respondents said they most often accessed the English version of the site (40%, 383). A further 26% (327) accessed in both English and another language, with 34% (327) accessing most often in another language version (Figure 14).

Figure 14 – Language version of EPALE accessed

**Q12: Do you more often access the English version of EPALE
or a different language version?**

I visit both the English
and another language version
26,35%

I more often visit
the English version
39,73%

I more often visit
a different language version
33,92%

Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=976

There were generally **high levels of satisfaction with the quantity and quality of the content in different language versions of EPALE**. 84% (756) of EPALE users who responded to the survey reported that they were happy with the amount of content available in their language (Figure 15). This represents a slight decrease on 2019 results (91%) but it is in any case a higher figure than the 2018 survey (79%). A total of 91% (839) of survey respondents were also happy with the quality of the language on the EPALE site (Figure 16). This result is quite in line with the figure from 2019 survey (94%).

The countries with the higher percentage of respondents that were not satisfied with the amount of content in their language were Hungary (60%, 3), Iceland, (60%, 3) Albania (50%, 3), Serbia (31%, 12), Greece (26%, 15) and Spain (26%, 17). It has to be noticed that for Iceland, Albania and Serbia this result was quite expected as the Icelandic, Albanian and Serbian linguistic versions were available for users only for 2 months before the survey was launched.

The countries with the higher percentage of respondents that were not happy with the language quality of their linguistic version were Iceland (43%, 3), Greece, (21%, 12) Albania (20%, 1), Turkey (19%, 5) and Serbia (18%, 7).

Figure 15 – Satisfaction with the amount of content in linguistic version
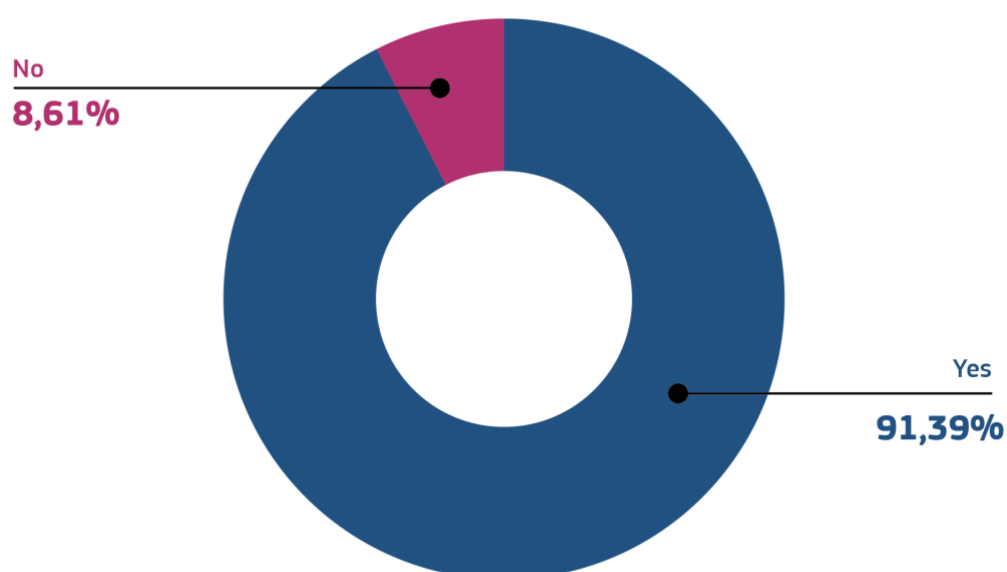
Q13: Are you satisfied with the amount of content available in your linguistic version?

No
15,91%

Yes
84,09%
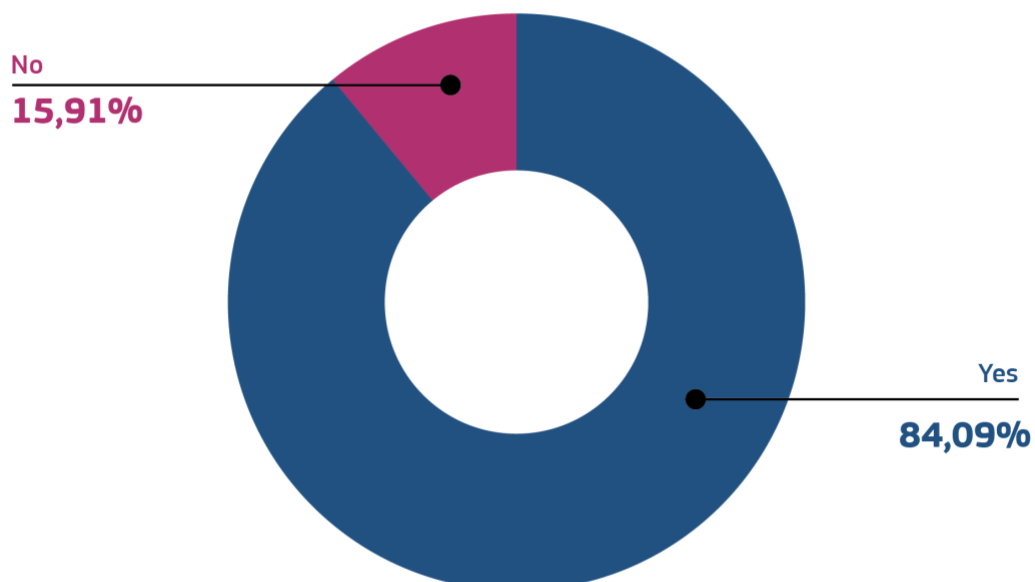
Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=899

Figure 16 – Satisfaction with language quality

Q14: Are you happy with the language quality of your linguistic version of EPALE?

No
8,61%

Yes
91,39%

Source EPALE Survey 2020, N=918

4 Conclusions

In the lights of the survey key findings, the EPALE strengths and weaknesses and the main action points for further improving the website can be summarized as follows:

- **Events and social media are the most successful channels for reaching out users** and therefore promotional and dissemination activities should focus on these channels also in the future.

- The good rates about the website usage frequency and the user awareness and appreciation of the latest contents and initiatives suggest that **serial contents** such as EPALE interviews, Resource Kits and Community Stories **have been effective in keeping the users interested and engaged**. These activities should be therefore kept and reinforced in the future.

- Finding **up-to-date information, news and events relevant to the users' professions** in the field of adult learning and education is the main reason that drives users to the website.

- According to the survey respondents, the **main strengths** of the EPALE website features are:

    o **The quality of information provided**

    o **The improved site speed**

    o **The improved quality of multimedia elements and website layout**

- On the other hand**,** the **main weaknesses** of the EPALE website features are:

    o The **difficulty in searching and finding relevant information and contents** and in general in **navigating the website**

    o The **lack of sufficient supporting materials and tutorials** for using the website

- The migration of the website on Drupal 8 planned for the second half of March 2021 featuring a general re-organization of contents and an improved search functionality should facilitate the users in finding relevant information on the website.

- The development of new manuals and tutorials for the website features should be taken into consideration as a future action point.

- **Over half of EPALE users usually browses the site without logging in**, mostly because they are not clear on the benefits of logging in or feel that they do not have to do so. In order to invert this trend, **actions for encouraging users to log in should be taken into consideration**, such as making available valuable contents, resources and materials only upon registration.

- **The vast majority** of the EPALE users felt that **the themes on the platform were appropriate and relevant**. The updating and reorganization of the EPALE themes foreseen with the migration of the website on Drupal 8, as well as the already in place selection of the annual themes taking into consideration feedbacks from EPALE stakeholders and users should keep this good result and further improve it in the future.

- Even if there's been a **consistent increase in the interaction among the EPALE community members** through online discussions, communities of practice, comments and researches of

partners in comparison to previous years, **there is room for improvement** considering that 48% of the respondents never interacted with other members. The organizations of **interactive online events and online discussions with live streaming broadcasting** implemented in the last part of 2020 and foreseen also throughout 2021 should further improve interaction among users.

- The features with which the users are more familiar are related to the **consultation of the website contents** such as blog posts, news articles, resources, courses, MOOCs and OERs. On the other hand, there is **room for improving the active participation of EPALE members** by encouraging them in using the website for participating in online discussions, uploading their own contents, finding partners and participating in Communities of Practice.

- The features most easily used are logging in to the website, participating in online discussion and finding relevant contents. Usability of other features seems quite good as well, with the exception of creating a partner request with the partner search tool. The improvements foreseen with the migration of the website on Drupal 8 should in any case increase the features usability in general.

- Even if there were generally **high levels of satisfaction with the quantity and quality of the content in different language versions of EPALE**, there is room for improvement as 38% of the respondents would be encouraged to use EPALE more often by the presence of more information in their language. This topic should be further discussed with the NSSs in order to find possible solutions.