



## EPICA INITIATIVE | NEWSLETTER – 3<sup>RD</sup> EDITION, DECEMBER 2018

### 3<sup>RD</sup> EPICA CONSORTIUM MEETING, DECEMBER 2018, GERMANY



**The attendees at EPICA Consortium, which took place in Potsdam, on 10th and 11th December 2018.**

The 3rd EPICA Consortium Meeting took place in the Hotel Seminaris, in the German city of Potsdam, nearby Berlin, in December 10-11, 2018. The meeting was organised by ICWE, Germany.

It was attended by representatives from all partner organisations of the consortium: ICDE (NO), MyDocumenta (ES), Open University of Tanzania (TZ), Maseno University (KE), Makerere University (UG), Open University of Catalonia (ES), the African Virtual University (KE) and ICWE (GE).

The purpose of the meeting was to review the achieved milestones and the year-to-date deliverables and tasks as well as to identify and discuss potential problems, issues and challenges that could arise.

The meeting also served the purpose to introduce and start the collaboration with the newly appointed External Advisory Board (EAB).

Finally the meeting enabled the consortium members to prepare the three main upcoming milestones in terms of accountability towards the European Commission.

Jean-Baptiste Milon, the project coordinator, opened the meeting and explained the structure of the following days and any changes to project related matters since the last consortium meeting in Arusha, Tanzania in July 2018. Rebecca Stromeyer, the project coordinator from ICWE, the meeting organiser, explained the logistical details related to the meeting and gave a short description of the historical importance of the city of Potsdam.

Each partner presented their advancements in the different work packages and informed of the progress of the project. It was agreed that all milestones of the project were on track.

During the first day of the meeting the following aspects were addressed:

- An overview of the business and sustainability plan that showed the efforts to find an optimised platform costs analysis.
- The legal issues related to the project such as GDPR and data privacy.
- The different actions that are being implemented to ensure a high dissemination and communication of the project.
- The skill gaps analysis developed by UOC and the maturity and needs report as a basis for the future co-design of the EPICA ePortfolio.
- The technological adaptation and integration of the ePortfolio with cloud-based technologies, based on the users' needs.
- Some financial aspects to report on the actual status of the project.



The African partner universities had the opportunity to talk about their latest experiences in testing the pilot system with students, which offered highly relevant insights for the future development of the ePortfolio.

The second day of the meeting counted with the presence of EPICA's new External Advisory Board (EAB). All partners made a short presentation to introduce themselves and their activities in the project to provide the EAB with a complete overview of the project highlighting the milestones achieved to date as well as the deliverables that lay ahead. Once all presentations were given, the EAB had the opportunity to ask concrete questions and offer the consortium some suggestions based on their different expertise and knowledge in the sphere. All their inputs were considered highly useful and relevant and they will be taken into account in the next steps of the project.

A short part of the meeting was dedicated to prepare the next meeting with the European Commission that will take place in March in Luxembourg.

There was also time for social activities that included the visit to a typical German Christmas market and a visit to Sans Souci Palace in Potsdam.

The meeting was considered a great success with all partners highly committed to the project and with all deliverables and milestones being delivered on time.

The next meeting will be held in Barcelona in June, 2019.

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## INCORPORATION OF THE EXTERNAL ADVISORY BOARD IN EPICA

During the 3rd Consortium meeting of the EPICA project that took place in Potsdam from December 10 - 11, the consortium partners had the great pleasure to welcome the newly appointed External Advisory Board (EAB) to the EPICA Initiative.

The role of these high-level experts will be to provide external objective feedback on the activities of the project throughout its duration. The EPICA partners were very pleased to welcome the three members of the EAB, whose diverse professional backgrounds and expertise will add immense value to the ongoing tasks ahead.

The three members of the EPICA External Advisory Board are:

### PROF. JUDE LUBEGA

Prof. Jude Lubega, Professor of Information Technology, with a longstanding and wide ranging experience in ICT4D. He is currently the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Uganda Technology and Management University. He previously served at Makerere University from 2007 to 2012 as the Deputy Dean and the Head of the Information Technology



Department in the College of Computing and Information Sciences. He is also the Chief Executive Officer of Eight Tech Consults, one of the leading ICT consulting companies in Uganda.

He is an experienced ICT4D consultant and has been involved in numerous researches and projects both nationally and internationally. He is a member of several boards and has been awarded research funding to undertake several ICT4D projects. He is formerly a researcher and lecturer in the School of Systems Engineering at the University of Reading, UK. He has been involved in developing several information systems including election monitoring using mobile devices.

## ILDIKÓ MÁZÁR

Ildikó Mázar is currently holding a position as Research and Development Associate at the Knowledge Innovation Centre (KIC) in Malta. She has been working in the field of open & distance education and e-learning since 1998, and for 3 years she served as Deputy Secretary General at the European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN). During these years Ildiko faced many challenges of differentiating between robust and impracticable ICT solutions, while she also played an active role in identifying when changes in policies and practices were needed to enable progress.



Throughout her career, both as employee and (since 2017) freelance consultant, she accumulated experience in research and development of innovative educational practices, as well as in facilitating their effective dissemination and multiplication. She has a deep understanding and knowledge of past and current EU funding mechanisms, the authoring and management of EU co-funded projects, and she enjoys collaborating with partners across borders, cultures and various educational and training sector. These qualities allow her to advise the EPICA partnership on both the content aspects and the formal delivery of the project outputs.

## ALBERT NSENGIYUMVA



Albert Nsengiyumva, Executive Secretary of ADEA, the Association for Development of Education in Africa and an expert in the field of technology supported education and training and on technical and vocational skills development. Prior to this, he was a Cabinet Member in the Rwandan Government from 2011 to 2015 and served as Minister of Infrastructure from 2011 to 2013 and Minister of State in charge of TVET from 2013 to 2015. Before joining the Cabinet, Mr Nsengiyumva worked for the National University of Rwanda as Director of ICT, the Ministry of Education as Coordinator of ICT in Education, and for the Workforce Force Development Authority (WDA) as Director General.

Since 2001, Mr Nsengiyumva has worked as freelance consultant for various international and bilateral development organisations particularly in ICT Policy and Regulation as well as Technical and Vocational

Skills development. He has built an extensive research expertise in both ICT and TVET working with the Washington State University, University of Washington, University of Maryland in the United States and the Research ICT Africa Network that was based at University of Witwatersrand in South Africa among others.

**During the EPICA Initiative, their expected roles will be:**

- To provide expert advice, feedback and recommendations on the development and results of EPICA.
- To provide input into the different work packages according to their expertise.
- To build relationships with stakeholders in Africa and in Europe that could be relevant to future exploitation and dissemination activities beyond the consortium.
- To promote the EPICA project within their networks to increase its visibility at all levels.

**The EPICA consortium**

**EPICA Initiative External  
Advisory Board:  
Albert Nsengiyumva,  
Ildikó Mázár and  
Prof. Jude Lubega.**

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**partners are grateful for their valuable help** and inputs during the meeting in Potsdam and appreciate that they will continue to contribute to the project by suggesting ways to improve the performance and outcomes of the EPICA Initiative.

**A CLOSE-UP ON MYDOCUMENTA | THE INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH**

Interview to Cristina Casanova and Andrea Contino, creators of MyDocumenta Eportfolio Ecosystem and co-founders of MyDocumenta, responsible for the development of the Eportfolio and its evolution in EPICA Initiative.

**How would you define an ePortfolio and what are its main features to encourage future EPICA users to make use of it?**

An ePortfolio is a powerful tool that allows presentation of a complete overview of a person's capacities and skills acquired both in formal and informal education. Its first objective is therefore to allow the people who use it to present themselves in the right way, highlighting their skills through their

work, the evaluations and recommendations of professors, colleagues, etc., and to show official recognitions and certifications.

Besides this primarily labour-market-oriented aspect, the ePortfolio offers other really interesting dimensions to improve the teaching and learning process:

- a) It is a powerful tool for self-reflection, which allows students to visualise and become aware of their evolution, progress, and weaknesses so that they can analyse and improve them.
- b) It allows teachers to undertake a formative assessment, following each student in their progress. This contrasts with the typical summative assessment of other tools in which only the final result is evaluated without taking into account the evolutionary process of knowledge and competences.

### How is MyD ePortfolio "tailored" to the different users' needs? How flexible can the EPICA ePortfolio be in order to be adapted to the necessities and desires of any student / teacher / university using it?

Flexibility is one of the priorities of the ePortfolio that, starting from the current MyDocumenta Eportfolio, will be developed within the framework of the EPICA Project. It has to respond to new pedagogical approaches of competency-based learning, and, in particular, it has to account for the key competences for work, including entrepreneurial skills. For this reason, the ePortfolio that is developed within the framework of the EPICA Project will allow a double typology of evaluation of the students' work: the traditional summative assessment based on numbers and letters, and the new formative and competency-based assessment.

In addition, another fundamental feature is that once students finish their studies, they can continue to use the ePortfolio as a personal tool to access the labour market or improve their work position. In this sense, the MyDocumenta Eportfolio, and its new version developed within the framework of the EPICA Project,



Cristina Casanova and  
Andrea Contino,  
MyDocumenta

will allow students who have finished their studies to separate their ePortfolio from the academic environment and use it for their personal purposes, free of charge.

Students will have their own URL, with all the contents, evaluations, recommendations, etc., which grants them access to their ePortfolio from anywhere in the world - as well as to anyone they want to share the information with. Moreover, they will have tools to create "permissions", enabling them to decide which content is visible and for whom.

### In which ways is the ePortfolio designed by MyDocumenta adapted for the EPICA project and for the African partner universities working with it?

Well, this is still a little secret... what we can say is that we are working intensively in collaboration with the UOC, Makerere University, Open University of Tanzania,

Maseno University, and AVU-African Virtual University to detect the requirements of the end users, students, professors, and administrators that will allow the new ePortfolio to respond to different needs. We are currently in the process of detection and analysis of the pedagogical, legal, and technological requirements, and this will soon lead us to the definition of the characteristics of the ePortfolio, its new functionalities, and its look and feel.

### **During the first stages of the project, have you noticed many differences between the European and the African universities' needs?**

Some, as is unavoidable. In the first place, it seemed to us that the competence approach is a little more familiar in the European universities, which for some years now have started to go in that direction, although with varying results. At the UOC, for example, we know that there are numerous initiatives, and teachers are “pushed” towards that approach. However, it is not a method that can be adopted from one day to another. You need teacher training, the right tools, and above all, the will and commitment of the university’s administrators and decision-makers. It is at this last level that we need to take the decision to support innovative teaching and learning models that are increasingly related to the labour market, helping to create bridges.

### **Who is likely to benefit from receiving access to an ePortfolio, i.e. how will this be useful to employers?**

As we have said before, obviously, the first beneficiaries are the students. Next are the teachers, who can improve their teaching methodologies through the , support of personalised teaching and follow-up. And of course, universities as institutions benefit too, since the students’ ePortfolios allow them to show best practices and the results of their innovation in a very attractive and accessible way.

However, there is yet another category, outside academia, which is going to gain. We are referring to companies and employers, who need to find qualified, motivated, and competent personnel who can contribute to making the economies and companies prosper. The student's ePortfolio allows them not only to see a qualification or final grade, as is the case of traditional evaluation methodologies, but also to understand much more clearly the strengths and weaknesses of each person. Therefore it helps make the selection process more accurate.

### **With its focus on skills being one of the main characteristics of the ePortfolio developed by MyD, can you explain how the EPICA ePortfolio will show evidence of the skills acquired by the users?**

What we can tell you is that we’ll use different systems, including a system of micro-credentials and open badges. An important feature of open badges is that they are interoperable and can be exported and visualised in many environments, online and offline. They also offer a good guarantee and reliability, since they allow tracing of how such credentials have been issued, by whom, when, and based on what results.

However, the open badge system will not be the only one. Of course, students can also choose which jobs to show under a certain category or competence, regulating access through a complete system of permissions. There will also be a feature related to comments received from other users, teachers, other students, external people belonging to the labour market, etc.

And finally, the uniqueness of this portfolio is that we are working on an analytical system that will automatically generate the level of competence acquired by each student, a level of competence that will be measured in relation to the main international frameworks.

We are now experimenting with this same method with many primary and secondary schools in Europe in relation to the acquisition of the digital competence. So far, it has provided excellent results.

### How has the EPICA project and the ePortfolio been received by the EPICA Partner universities and their students?

So far, we've received very good feedback in terms of features, usability, and usefulness. For example, one of the teachers of the Makerere University involved in the pilot has informed us that the students, even after the end of this first pilot, still use the ePortfolio to present their work and evidence. This is great, because it shows a great acceptance and need, besides the "obligation" of the pilot. But we are just at the beginning, and in the coming two weeks, we are expecting the results of the analysis of the first pilot, performed between March and December 2018, and analysed by the UOC - Open University of Catalonia. The second pilot, with the new ePortfolio, is expected by the end of 2019, and then we'll be able to get a full overview.

### What do you think are the most important coming steps toward a successful implementation of EPICA's strategy, such as overcoming technological requirements, increasing the visibility of the initiative, etc.?

We think the consortium is doing a great job in many aspects: technological improvements, dissemination, and engaging relevant stakeholders such as employers, administrations, national policy makers, etc.

Another aspect that will be analysed deeply in the next months is what we call the "ePortfolio implementation pack", which also includes the analysis and definition of internal processes and resources needed in each university in order to perform a successful implementation of the ePortfolio, which comprises fully engaging students, teachers, and administrators.

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## EPICA AT OEB 2018.

### THE LEADING CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION ON TECHNOLOGY-SUPPORTED LEARNING AND TRAINING

Earlier this December, we had the pleasure of presenting the EPICA Initiative in Berlin to 2000+ attendees of the **OEB Global & Learning Technologies Conference**.

OEB Global is the leading international conference & exhibition on technology-supported learning and training for the public, corporate and academic sectors. Each year, learning enthusiasts from more than 80 countries gather in Berlin to discuss the future of learning. The overall theme this year was 'Learning to Love Learning'. It was a privilege to have the opportunity to present EPICA to such a high-level expert audience.

**EPICA Initiative  
Partners after their  
Session at OEB 2018.**

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Our panel of EPICA representatives comprised of:

- Paul Birevu Muyinda, Makerere University, Uganda
- Michael Opiyoh, University of Maseno, Kenya
- Beatrice Okoth, University of Maseno, Kenya
- Mildred Ayere, University of Maseno, Kenya
- Rosa García Calero, eLearning Africa, Spain

In a session specifically dedicated to the EPICA Initiative project, they addressed a highly interested group of OEB delegates to detail the underlying motivations and goals of the EPICA initiative. This included the project's history, our current efforts to establish the ePortfolio strategy, as well as how people can get involved, all of which was warmly received.

We would like to thank the OEB organisers, as well as all of the attendees and interested parties who made our presence on behalf of EPICA such a valuable delight for us and the project as a whole.

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To learn more about **EPICA Initiative** co-funded by the H2020 Programme of the European Union, and the purposes that underpin it, please [browse our website](#).

Do you know friends or colleagues who might be interested in receiving information about **EPICA Initiative**? Feel free to direct them to the subscription form: <http://newsletter.epica-initiative.africa>.