

Users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries in Finland

Final report

March 2013

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Acknowledgements

The authors of this report are grateful for the input and assistance of the following people who helped ensure the success of the project:

Jan Braeckman	Bibnet	Belgium
Kelly Carey	GMMB	
Marcel Chirarov	Biblionet Romania	Romania
Mikkel Christoffersen	Kulturstyrelsen / Danish Agency for Culture	Denmark
Giedrė Čistovienė	National Library of Lithuania	Lithuania
Chris Coward	Technology and Social Change Group (TASCHA), University of Washington	
Annie Dourlent	Bibliothèque publique d'information	France
Elaine Fulton	Scottish Library and Information Council/CILIP in Scotland	United Kingdom
Francoise Gaudet	Bibliothèque publique d'information	France
Robin Knowles	Civic Agenda	
Maciej Kochanowicz	Library Development Program, Information Society Development Foundation	Poland
Alexandre Lemaire	Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles Service de la lecture publique	Belgium
Zdenek Matušík	Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic (SKIP)	Czech Republic
María Antonia Carrato Mena	Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte	Spain
Dan Mount	Civic Agenda	
Julia Nagy	GMMB	
Margarida Oleiro	Direção-Geral do Livro, dos Arquivos e das Bibliotecas	Portugal
Marjolein Oomes	Netherlands Institute for Public Libraries	Netherlands
Helen Osborn	Libraries NI	United Kingdom
Kristine Paberza	State Agency „Culture Information Systems“	Latvia
Jeremy Paley	Global Libraries, Bill & Melinda Gates foundation	USA
Stefano Parise	Comune di Milano	Italy
Aldo Pirola	Comune di Milano	Italy
Vasilis Polyhronopoulos	Total Quality Unit of Greek Academic Libraries	Greece
Renata Sadunishvili	Independent consultant	Lithuania
Janet Sawaya	Global Libraries, Bill & Melinda Gates foundation	USA
Miriam Schriefers	Deutscher Bibliotheksverband e.V.	Germany
David Streatfield	Consultant	United Kingdom
Ian Watson	Adult & Community Services Directorate, Lancashire County Council	United Kingdom
Barbro Wigell-Ryynänen	Ministry of Education and Culture	Finland
Branimira Vezhdarova	Glob@I Libraries – Bulgaria	Bulgaria
Anna Kåring Wagman	Swedish Library Association	Sweden
Helen Williams	CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales	United Kingdom
Dr George Zachos	Council of Libraries and Archives at the Ministry of Education	Greece

Disclaimer

This report is based on research funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation.

Executive summary

Objectives and research approach

TNS, an independent research company with a global presence, was commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation to conduct research across 17 EU countries to identify perceptions and types of use of public libraries. The purpose of the research was to understand the impact that public libraries in the EU have on users' lives.

The research included:

- a workshop among the study stakeholders to discuss the priorities for the research;
- desk research, to collate key data concerning libraries;
- a survey of a representative sample of the population aged 15 and over in each of the 17 countries;
- a survey among library users and public access computer (PAC) users aged 15 and over, in each of the 17 countries, conducted in libraries; and
- qualitative research among library users and library staff.

This report provides a brief overview of the results for Finland and compares the results to the EU total.

The public library landscape

- The desk research estimates that there are 836 public libraries in Finland, which equates to 1.5 libraries per 10,000 population, compared with an average of 1.3 libraries per 10,000 population across the EU.
- Computer access is currently available in 100% of public libraries in Finland.

Library and PAC usage

- An estimated 3 million adults in Finland, around two thirds of adults (67%), had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 0.9 million adults in Finland, 19% of adults, had used PACs in the last 12 months, significantly higher than the average of 4% of adults across the EU.
- PAC users in Finland, on a par with the EU average, were more likely to be women (56%) than men (44%). PAC users in Finland were more likely than the EU average to be aged 55 and over.
- The primary motivations of PAC users across the EU are the free nature of the service together with the lack of other options that people have. PAC users in Finland were twice as likely as those across the EU to say that library computer hardware/software is better than that at home or work, reflecting the investment that has gone in to ICT technology in libraries in Finland.
- Overall, it is estimated that 80,000 PAC users in Finland had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.
- The value placed on the PAC service was slightly lower among users in Finland than the EU average. Overall, 84% of PAC users in Finland said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users. Just over a quarter of PAC users in Finland (27%) said the service was extremely valuable, below the EU average (36%).
- Satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users: 93% of users in Finland were satisfied.

Perceptions and impacts of public libraries

- 'Free access to computers' and 'free access to the internet' were both rated as important by around three fifths of library users in Finland, which was lower than the equivalent figure of around seven out of ten users across Europe.
- Nine in ten (90%) of the general public in Finland (including both library users and non-users) felt libraries were either very effective, effective or fairly effective at meeting the needs of their local community. This was considerably higher than the average across the EU of 64%.
- Around a third (35%) of the public in Finland felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, which was below the EU average (40%).
- Overall 84% of PAC users in Finland said their PAC use had delivered at least one impact for them, in line with the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 0.7 million people in Finland.
- Library users in Finland were more likely than the EU average to strongly agree that public libraries 'Are accessible to everyone' (88% Finland compared with 70% EU), 'Offer a politically neutral environment' (67% Finland compared with 50% EU). 'Are friendly and welcoming' (74% Finland compared with 58% EU) and 'provide access to information to those who don't have this elsewhere' (80% Finland, 65% EU).

Informal and non-formal learning

- In Finland 23% of library users had taken part in an educational activity in a library in the last 12 months, which was slightly below the EU average of 25%.

Employment and use of PACs for business

- A quarter (25%) of PAC users in Finland had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, below the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 0.2 million PAC users in Finland who had used PAC for employment related activity.
- An estimated 33,500 PAC users in Finland had used a PAC to apply for a job in the last 12 months, and an estimated 7,000 adults were successful in securing employment by this means.

E-government and active citizenship

- The library survey found that a quarter of PAC users in Finland (25%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, similar to the EU average of 24%. The most common ways in which PAC users in Finland interacted with public authorities were to obtain information from public authorities' websites (20%) and to send filled in forms (7%).
- Overall, 18% of PAC users in Finland had used PAC for civic engagement activities in the past 3 months, lower than the average for users across the EU (26%). The two most common community engagement activities were reading and posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (12% Finland compared with 14% EU) and seeking information on local/national/EU government activity (8% Finland compared with 10% EU).

1. Background and methodology

1.1 Context for the research

Public libraries across the European Union (EU) have long played an important role in communities by providing free access to information, guidance from trained librarians, and public meeting space. As meaningful participation in society increasingly requires access to digital information and resources, many public libraries in the EU have expanded their offerings to include access to information and communications technologies (ICTs) like computers and the Internet.

There is a growing body of evidence about the ways public access to ICTs contributes to economic, health, education, and social development¹. For instance, the Global Impact Study on Public Access to ICTs, which covers five developing countries, found that those using Public Access Computers reported positive impact related to communication (79%), education (78%), access to government information (40%) and health (37%). More than 80% of public services in the EU are now fully available online,² but in 2011, just 41% of the EU population used government services electronically.³ Today, some Europeans have their first experiences with computers or the Internet at a public library, and for some individuals this may remain the only place they can access ICTs (or access them without paying unaffordable fees)⁴.

Under the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the EU has set ambitious objectives in many of the development areas to which access-to-information efforts contribute – specifically employment, innovation, education, and social inclusion. EU Member States are expected to meet targets in these areas by 2020. There is anecdotal evidence that ICT access through public libraries can support the implementation of the specific growth, education, and cohesion policies related to the EU 2020 Strategy, such as digital skills and inclusion milestones described under the Digital Agenda for Europe (one of seven flagship initiatives of the Strategy) or informal and non-formal learning, which is mentioned in three of the seven flagship initiatives. In other policy areas, such as supporting a skilled workforce and connecting people to employment opportunities, public libraries' roles may be less obvious and additional data are needed to demonstrate the contributions of public libraries and help them secure EU support for their work.

This research, which includes EU-wide and country-specific reports, was commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation to illuminate the role of public libraries in supporting social and economic policies under the EU 2020 Strategy.

1.2 Research objectives

The main purpose of the research was to understand the impact that public libraries in the EU have on users' lives.

1.3 Research method

The research was conducted in the following seventeen countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Finland, France, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom.

¹ See [The Global Impact Study of Public Access to Information & Communication Technology](#) about the scale, character, and impacts of public access to information and communication technologies. Looking at libraries, telecenters, and cybercafes, the study investigates impact in a number of areas, including communication and leisure, culture and language, education, employment and income, governance, and health. Implemented by the University of Washington's [Technology & Social Change Group](#) (TASCHA), the Study is part of a broader research project supported by Canada's [International Development Research Centre](#) (IDRC) and a grant to IDRC from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#).

² [Eurostat](#), 2010

³ [Eurostat](#), 2011

⁴ Sciadas, G., with Lyons, H., Rothschild, C., & Sey, A. (2012). *Public access to ICTs: Sculpting the profile of users*. Seattle: Technology & Social Change Group, University of Washington Information School.

The research involved several phases. First, desk research was carried out to collate existing information showing the public library landscape in the survey countries, using sources such as IFLA, national and local library statistics, local library associations, national statistical offices, Eurostat, Eurobarometer and so on. Survey work was carried out in October/November 2012.

- A representative sample of 1,008 members of the public aged 15+ in Finland (17,816 across the 17 countries) were interviewed regarding their usage of libraries, computers in libraries and their attitudes towards libraries.
- Interviews were carried out in libraries. In Finland, 730 interviews were conducted with people who had not used Public Access Computers (PACs) in libraries (12,537 across the 17 countries) and 713 with those who had (11,716 across the 17 countries). The interviews in Finland were conducted in 29 libraries which were selected and contacted with help from a representative of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Respondents were interviewed face-to-face.
- Qualitative fieldwork was conducted, consisting in each country of five 60-minute depth interviews with library managers and four 90-minute group discussions with PAC users. At least 3 libraries were represented in each country, in both urban and semi-rural locations.

Survey results were weighted to ensure that the final results were representative of the population within each country. Weighting was also applied to rebalance the weight of each country within the pan-European totals, in proportion to the population size.

1.4 This report

This report provides a brief overview of the results for Finland and compares the results to the EU total. EU results are based on findings from the 17 countries included in this study. Individual reports for each country surveyed have been produced as well as an overall report⁵.

Throughout this report where we refer to:

- A 'library': This means a public library, which anyone can go to, and does not include school, college, or university libraries'
- PAC user/usage': This refers to usage of a public access computer to access the internet within a public library, and is based on those who responded affirmatively to the following question:

Have you used a public access computer in a public library to access the internet in the last 12 months? Please do not include using your personal computer or smart phone in the library.

Throughout this report comparisons are made between the findings in Finland and the average across the EU. The EU average is calculated based on responses from the 17 countries in the survey. It should be noted that figures for Finland are *included* in the EU average, which has the effect of lessening the statistical power of comparisons between the Finland and EU figures.

While most of the data is presented in terms of percentages, on a number of occasions throughout this report data have been grossed up to represent the population of Finland and are presented in terms of estimated numbers.

2. The public library landscape and internet provision

There are 836 public libraries in Finland (2011), which equates to 1.5 libraries per 10,000 population, compared with an average across the 17 EU countries of 1.3 libraries per 10,000 population.

⁵ Quick, Prior, Toombs, Taylor and Currenti (2013): *Cross-European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries* (funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation)

Finland is recognized internationally as a forerunner in the library field.

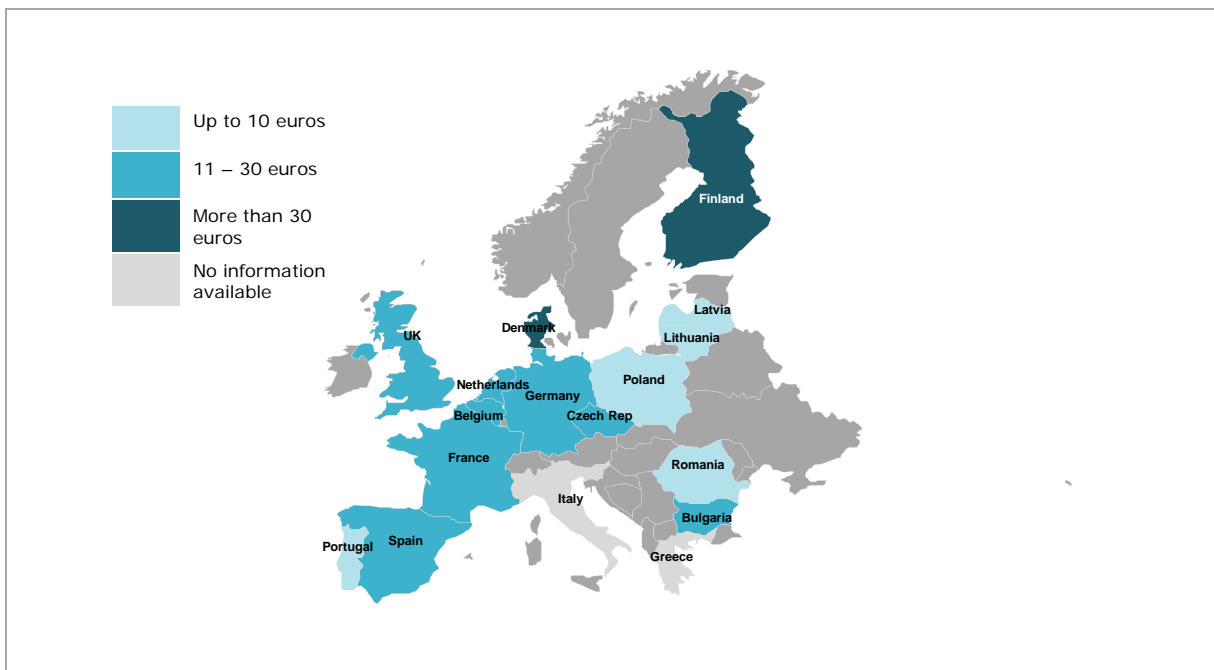
Finland is known for its comprehensive library network, high user and lending rates and effective use of ICT technology and information networks in libraries. Library services in Finland are efficient, accessible and cost-effective.

Public libraries are governed by national law and follow a national library policy. The Council for Public Libraries is the national representative body of public libraries. The Ministry of Education and Culture is the national administrative authority and supports libraries by financing many centrally produced services. Both public and research libraries are open to all. No fee is charged for either borrowing or the use of collections at the library.

Finland is one of the few countries in the world which have strategic documents outlining library development. In Finland, library and information services promote equal access to education and culture, reading and art appreciation, constant development of knowledge, skills and citizenship skills, internationalization and lifelong learning.

Annual public spending on libraries per capita in Finland at 63 Euros was significantly above the average for the other countries of the EU, as shown in the map below:

Figure 1: Annual spending on libraries per capita



Source: TNS desk research

Computer access is offered by 100% of public libraries in Finland. The proportion of public libraries with internet access in Finland is also 100%.

Eurostat data (2011) for Internet access at home shows that Finland has one of the highest levels in Europe, with 84% of households having access to the Internet, compared with an EU average of 73%. It may therefore be expected that demand for and usage of PAC services would be lower in Finland than in other countries.

3. Library and PAC usage

3.1 Access to libraries and PACs

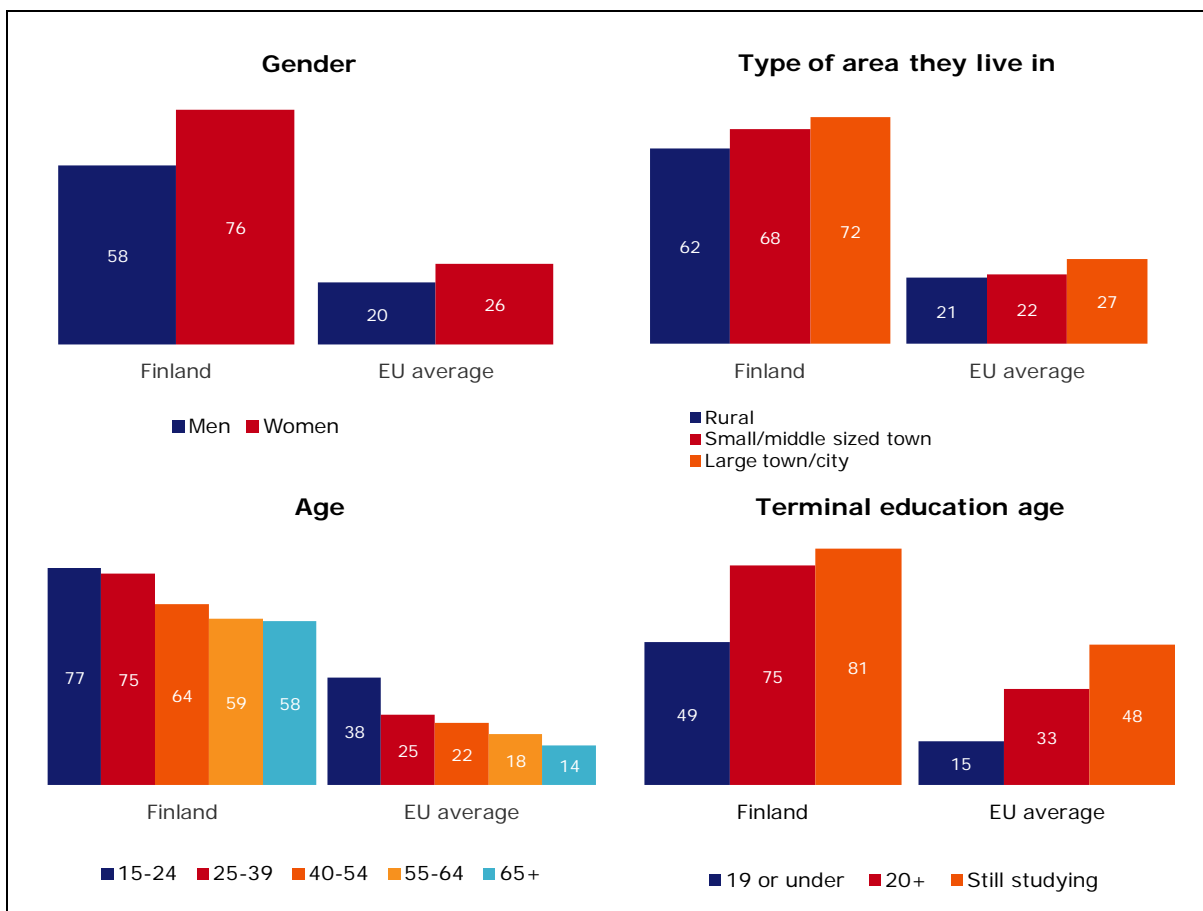
The general public survey found that library usage in Finland was significantly above the EU average.

- An estimated 3 million adults in Finland, about two thirds of adults in Finland (67%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 1.8 million adults, almost two fifths (39%) of adults in Finland, had used a library at least once a month, against an EU average of 14%.

The prevalence of library use in the last 12 months, by different groups in Finland and across the EU, is shown in Figure 2. In Finland:

- Women (76%) were more likely than men (58%) to have visited a library, in line with the findings across the EU.
- Library usage in Finland was higher among the younger age groups, decreasing steadily with age, (77% of those aged 15-24, 75% of those aged 25-39 and 64% of those aged 40-54 had visited a library in the last 12 months), falling to 59% of those aged 55-64 and 58% of those aged 65 and over. Library usage in Finland was higher than the EU average in every age group.
- Library use was higher in large towns and cities (72%) than in smaller towns (68%) or rural areas (62%).
- Library use was higher among those who were still studying – a staggering 81% of this group had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with the EU average of 48%.

Figure 2: Percentage of each group who had used a library in the last 12 months



Source: Omnibus survey – Q1. Have you visited a public library in the last 12 months?

Base: Finland – All adults (1008), Men (506), Women (502), 15-24 (122), 25-39 (274), 40-54 (187), 55-64 (173), 65+ (252), Large town/city (277), Small town (372), Rural area (358), Finished education 19 or under (343), 20 or over (515), Still studying (101).
 EU - All adults (17816), Men (8521), Women (9295), 15-24 (2636), 25-39 (4152), 40-54 (4592), 55-64 (2937), 65+ (3496), Large town/city (5352), Small town (6653), Rural area (5633), Finished education 19 or under (9943), 20 or over (5500), Still studying (1801).

The profile of library users in Finland, compared with across the EU, was:

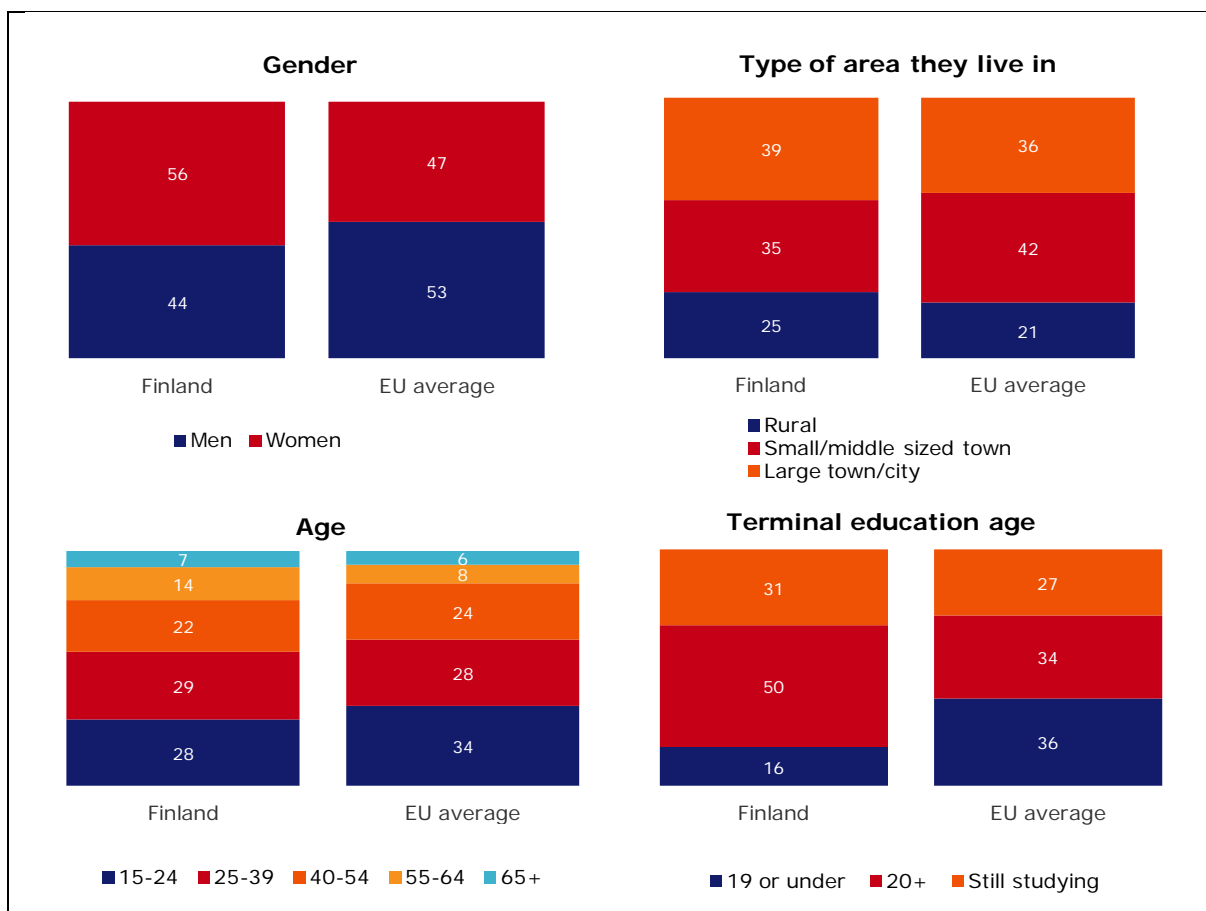
- 43% of library users in Finland were men, 57% women; on a par with the EU average (42% men, 58% women)
- Users in Finland had a slightly different library user age profile to the EU average; both had around a half aged 15-39 and a half aged 40 and over, but in Finland there was a higher proportion of 55+s. In Finland 17% were aged 55-64 and 15% aged 65+; compared with the EU average of 12% aged 55-64 and 12% aged 65+.

Over a quarter (28%) of those who had visited a library in Finland in the last 12 months used a PAC, which is considerably higher than the EU average of 14%. When those who had not used a PAC were asked why this was, the majority (83%) said they had no need to because they had a computer/internet at home.

In total, the survey found that 19% of adults in Finland had used PACs in the last 12 months, very significantly higher than the average of 4% of adults across the EU countries. This is estimated to be around 0.9 million adults within Finland.

PAC users in Finland, unlike other countries, were more likely than the EU average to be women, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Profile of those who had used a PAC in the last 12 months



Source: Library survey – C4. Have you used a public access computer in a public library to access the Internet in the last 12 months?

Base: All PAC users Finland (713), EU (11716).

Over three fifths of users in Finland (62%) had used PACs once every three months or less often, higher than the EU average (50%). 6% of PAC users in Finland made use of PACs at least once a week, compared with one in five across the 17 EU countries, with 23% doing so once to three times a month (compared with 27% across the EU).

The qualitative research found that all libraries promoted their ICT services through normal advertising at the library, such as by handing out course brochures and personal recommendations of services at face-to-face interactions with users; broadcasting advertisements on the library's own information screens, via social media and the library's website. Some also published advertisements in the local newspaper and one library arranged their personnel's own ICT training in open spaces where anyone could join in to

listen and take part. Another library had a bus focusing on ICT services going around the city, encouraging people to take part on courses arranged at the library's ICT service point.

Some managers emphasized that rather than devices or guidance, nowadays users had an increasing need for spaces to facilitate their own needs, for example by providing them with a quiet 'urban office' space with wifi where they could come with own laptops or tablets. Some had cut down the amount of computers at their library as a result of this trend. This did not mean that ICT has become less important in libraries, just that the emphasis in needs had altered.

Libraries provided an easy, low threshold starting point of ICT skills for those who for one reason or another – be it age, economic situation or coming from a different culture – had not acquired the ICT skills they needed.

"The idea of going to a community college course [in ICT] is rather frightening, because people imagine that on these courses you have already know a lot. People come to our courses or they take time with the librarian [to learn ICT] and then after that they go to a chargeable course [elsewhere]." (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Finland)

To encourage greater use of ICT some libraries had put much emphasis on online advertisement and on setting up large interactive touch screens displaying the libraries ICT services offering. Some libraries also had job-seeker groups and immigrant groups on language and professional courses coming for visits to the library, and during these visits ICT services were introduced to them as well. One manager described how they had a 'cultural café' for immigrants, which introduced them to the library's services. Some libraries had taken part in a (funded) project which worked to provide ICT materials and personal support in the immigrant population's own languages, such as Arabic.

"As a sequel, we also had a project in co-operation with the community college to train ICT assistants in 18 languages and then the community college trained assistants for basics of internet use. It was a good project and there were many people attending. But still we felt that we would need 'agents' from within the [immigrant] community who would bring people from that community to the libraries [to use ICT]. [...] I feel that in ethnic minorities there are many people who could use [ICT] and would benefit from using the internet..." (Library Manager, Urban, Finland)

It was considered important to encourage trust in library staff and show them to be available to help with any problem, in order to encourage hard-to-reach groups to use ICT in libraries.

"You are given time and guidance and you can come again if you don't learn at once. We try to encourage people by letting them know that we help everyone with any kind of a problem." (Library Manager, Urban, Finland)

"We have gained people's trust so that people come to us. We have a good reputation, we get good feedback. It's the trust. [If there was no trust] people would not dare come and ask those things [about ICT]. People come to us with rather personal issues like [online] bank issues that they deal with us, or they ask for help in writing an email or writing complaints in health care issues" (Library Manager, Urban, Finland)

It was emphasized how important it was to work with people at a slow enough pace guided by the 'learning by doing' principle. This was carried out in small groups with two teachers guiding users to solve problems as they arose.

In reaching users and increasing library ICT use some of the mentioned needs were on a smaller scale, such as being able to provide users with their favorite software or to be able to use lighter virus protection, this being impossible because of the city's general policies. Some libraries wished for more flexibility and self-determination, for example in the kind of software they could use to flexibly meet people's requirements and preferences.

Users' motivations for using ICT in libraries were that it was free of charge and easy to access, as a library was a place that everybody could visit regardless of their social status or expertise in ICT. Users thought that central urban libraries in particular had a convenient location which was quite easy to reach from different parts of the city. Further, using ICT in a library instead of staying at home was seen as a good way of preventing oneself from becoming isolated from the society if for example they were unemployed or on a low income. It also helped users to maintain a regular diurnal rhythm in a life situation where it could be otherwise lost. Using computers only in a library environment was also reported to help users to reduce their computer usage and therefore reduce the danger of them becoming addicted to computers.

All libraries had fixed high speed broadband internet connections which were considerably faster and had less interference than most of the respondents' own connections at home. A library was also considered a peaceful and quiet place and hence it was better for many to use ICT there than at home among the rest of family or another noisy environment.

The presence of other facilities such as books, DVDs and CDs also attracted users who went to the library to use ICT. It was perceived as very convenient that everything needed for studying or recreational purposes was conveniently at hand.

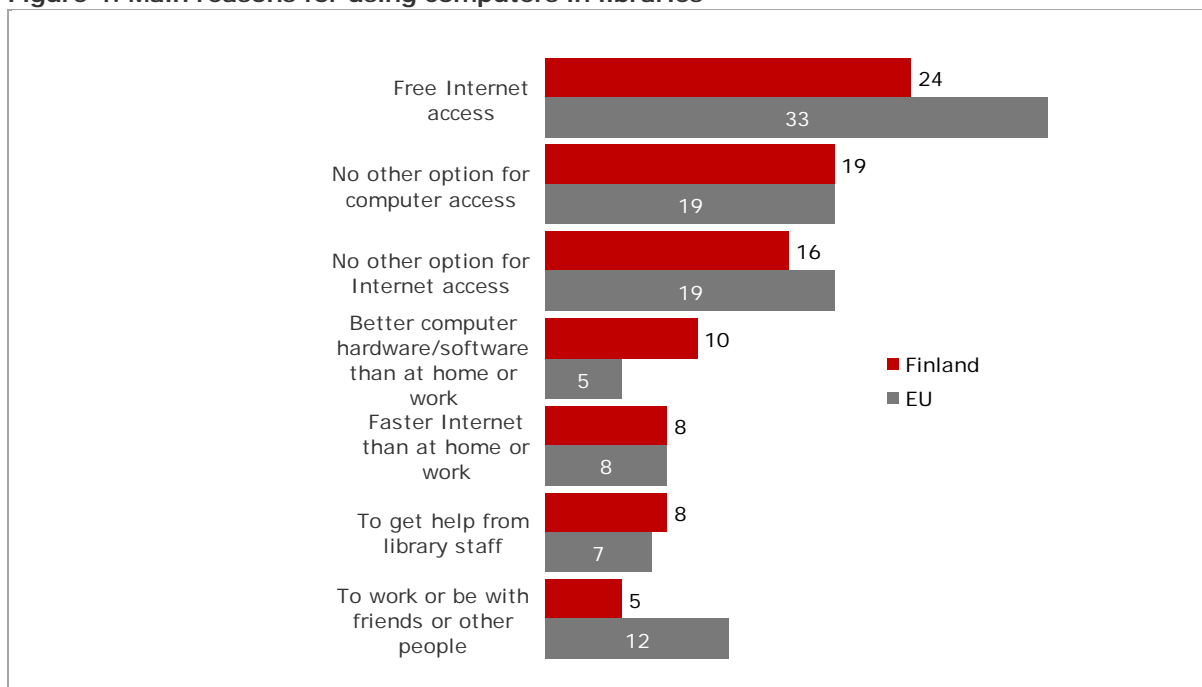
"I have scanned lots of photos and uploaded them to a stick. It is quiet here; nobody can come and disturb me. This is an environment where it is extremely efficient to work." (User, woman, 25-39 years, Finland)

"I come here to use computer because it is free. I'm unemployed so it is cost effective when it doesn't cost a thing. At home you should understand about firewalls and other protection much more than I do. Here you just sit to the table and do whatever you like." (User, woman, 40-64 years, Finland)

3.2 Reasons for using PACs

PAC users interviewed in the in-library survey were asked what their main reasons were for using computers, the internet and software in public libraries within the last 12 months. It is clear that in Finland and across the EU, the primary motivations for PAC users are the free nature of the service together with the lack of other options that people have. PAC users in Finland were twice as likely as those in other countries to say that library computer hardware/software is better than that at home or work (10% in Finland compared with 5% across the EU), reflecting the investment that has gone in to ICT technology in libraries in Finland.

Figure 4: Main reasons for using computers in libraries



Source: Library Survey - C8 What are the main reasons you have chosen to use computers, Internet and software at public libraries in the last 12 months?

Base: All PAC users- Finland (713); EU (11716)

PAC users were also asked two more direct questions as to what other options they had, firstly regarding where else they could access the internet from, and secondly, where else they could access the internet *'for free'*. In Finland, 2% of PAC users said that they had no other options for accessing the internet (compared with 11% across the EU), and a further 8% that there was no other source of free internet for them (compared with 14% across the EU). Overall, it is estimated that c.80, 000 PAC users in Finland (9% of PAC users) had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.

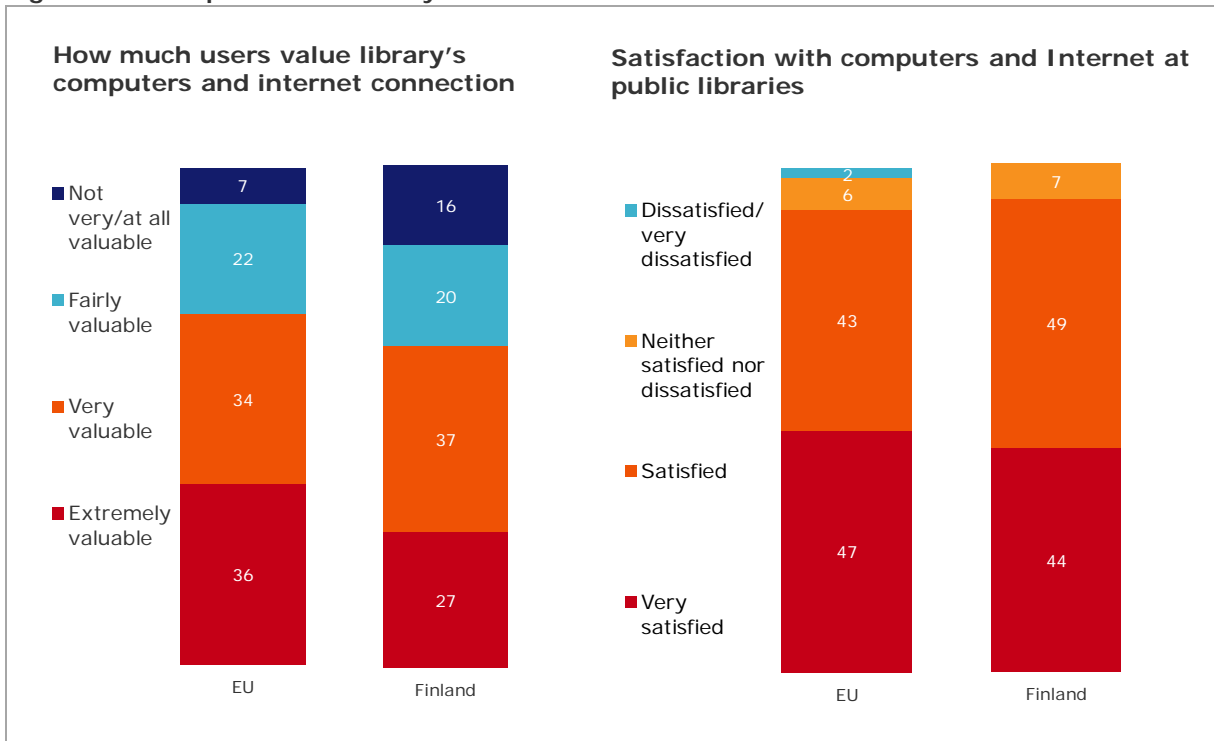
Those who indicated that they had no other options for accessing the internet often tended to come from 'digitally excluded' (and often 'socially excluded') groups, which clearly highlights the role of PACs in the future of the EU's 2020 Growth Strategy. Specifically, older people were particularly likely to indicate that they did not have any other options - 8% of PAC users aged 65+ had no alternative internet access, compared with 0% of those aged 15-24.

The value placed on the PAC service was slightly lower among users in Finland than the EU average, as shown in Figure 5. Overall, 84% of PAC users in Finland said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users. Just over a quarter of PAC users in Finland (27%) said the service was extremely valuable, compared with 36% across the EU.

The library's computers and internet connection tended to be valued fairly equally by different subgroups of users in Finland.

Satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users, as shown in Figure 5: 93% of users in Finland were satisfied. Again, users in Finland were slightly less likely to say they were very satisfied with computers and internet at the library than EU users as a whole; 44% of users in Finland said they were very satisfied, compared with 47% across the EU.

Figure 5: Value placed on PACs by users and satisfaction with PACs



Source: Library survey - C30 How much do you value the library's computers and Internet connection? & C31 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your access to computers and the Internet at public libraries?

Base: All PAC users. Finland (713); EU (11716)

In Finland, just over three-fifths of PAC users (63%) said that when they go to a library to use a computer, they find a free computer straight away, and a further 27% that they have to wait for no more than 10 minutes. These waiting times are longer than the averages reported across the EU (72% of PAC users find a free computer straight away, and a further 16% wait for no more than 10 minutes).

In the qualitative research the number of computers offered to users in the participating libraries ranged from 19 to 60. These were usually equipped with the most common software like Windows and Office packages and the most popular internet browsers; some also had image processing software like PaintShop Pro and various freeware. Scanners and printers were also provided, as were Wi-Fi networks. Some also provided laptops and tablets, equipment and software for digitization of materials such as photos, cassettes and video tapes. One library also provided a studio with Mac software for recording and performing music.

According to library managers, most equipment and software worked fairly reliably and was sufficiently up to date for normal use, though sometimes the versions of software were thought to be a bit dated. Staff thought that users nowadays had increasingly high expectations of ICT equipment as it evolved so quickly, and felt that libraries were constantly lagging behind as the bar was continuously raised. Managers did not see any need for faster broadband connections but did report some problems with the reliability of connection, although these were not constant. The number of PCs provided was also seen to be sufficient, particularly in the urban libraries.

Users also tended to be satisfied with the hardware and software provided, with the exception of those with more advanced needs who felt that the range of computer programs was not as extensive and up-to-date as they would have liked.

All libraries had high-speed broadband internet connection. In the urban libraries that was mostly considered to be fast enough but users of the semi-rural library were not as content with the speed of the broadband; it was not fast enough for all gaming purposes and the speed of downloading pictures was also too slow in some instances.

"All computers that I have used have worked reliably." (User, man, 25-39 years, Finland)

"I have played here. It usually works very well, but some games do not function." (User, man, 16-24 years, Finland)

"Their operating system requires updating little by little. Vista crashes once in a while. There is too little memory left." (User, man, 25-39 years, Finland)

4. Impressions of public libraries

4.1 Importance of library services

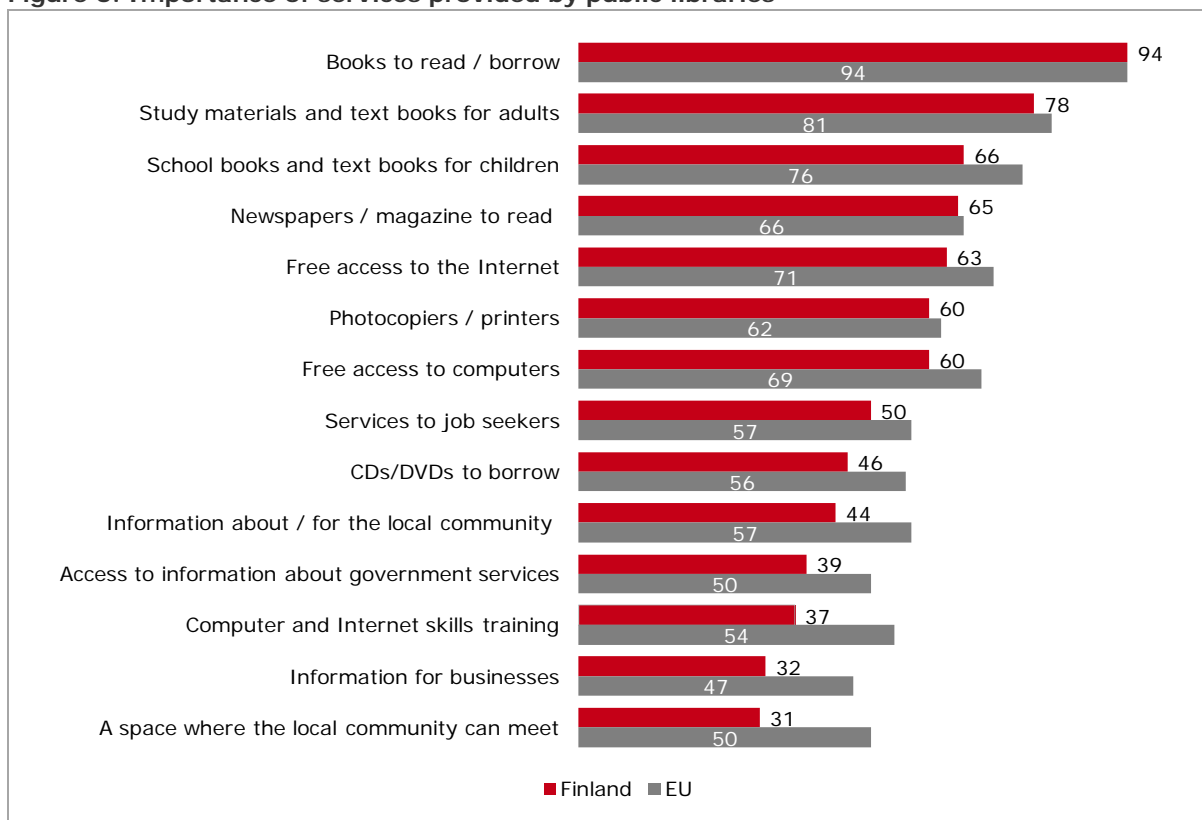
Library users (both PAC users and non-PAC users) were asked to rate each of a list of services that could be offered by libraries, on a 5-point scale from 'extremely important' to 'not at all important'. Figure 6 shows the percentage in Finland, and across the EU, rating each service as 4 or 5 on the scale.

Not surprisingly, the core service of 'books to read/borrow' was considered the most important, rated as important by 94% of users in Finland (and 94% across the EU), followed by 'study materials/text books for adults' and 'school books' (78% and 66% of library users in Finland respectively considered these important)

'Newspapers/magazines to read' were considered the next important by library users in Finland with almost two thirds (65%) mentioning this.

'Free access to the internet' and 'free access to computers' were both rated as important by around three-fifths of library users in Finland, which was lower than the equivalent figure of around seven out of ten users across Europe.

Figure 6: Importance of services provided by public libraries



Source: Library survey - C15 How important is this service that can be provided by public libraries.

Base: All library users - Finland (1443); EU (24253)

Users in Finland were less likely than the EU average to rate the provision of computer and Internet skills training as an important service (37% in Finland compared with 54% EU average).

Regarding the importance of libraries to community life, 'providing a space where the local community can meet' was seen as important by 31% of library users in Finland (compared with 50% EU average), and 'providing information about or for the local community' was seen as important by 44% of library users in Finland (compared with 57% EU average).

In the qualitative research, the library environment was described positively. It was commonly described as being familiar, peaceful, relaxing informative, homely, cosy, versatile (with a large collections of books, magazines, music and films), large and spacious, with cheerful, helpful and professionally skilled personnel, and a suitable place to meet friends.

4.2 Effectiveness and funding of public libraries

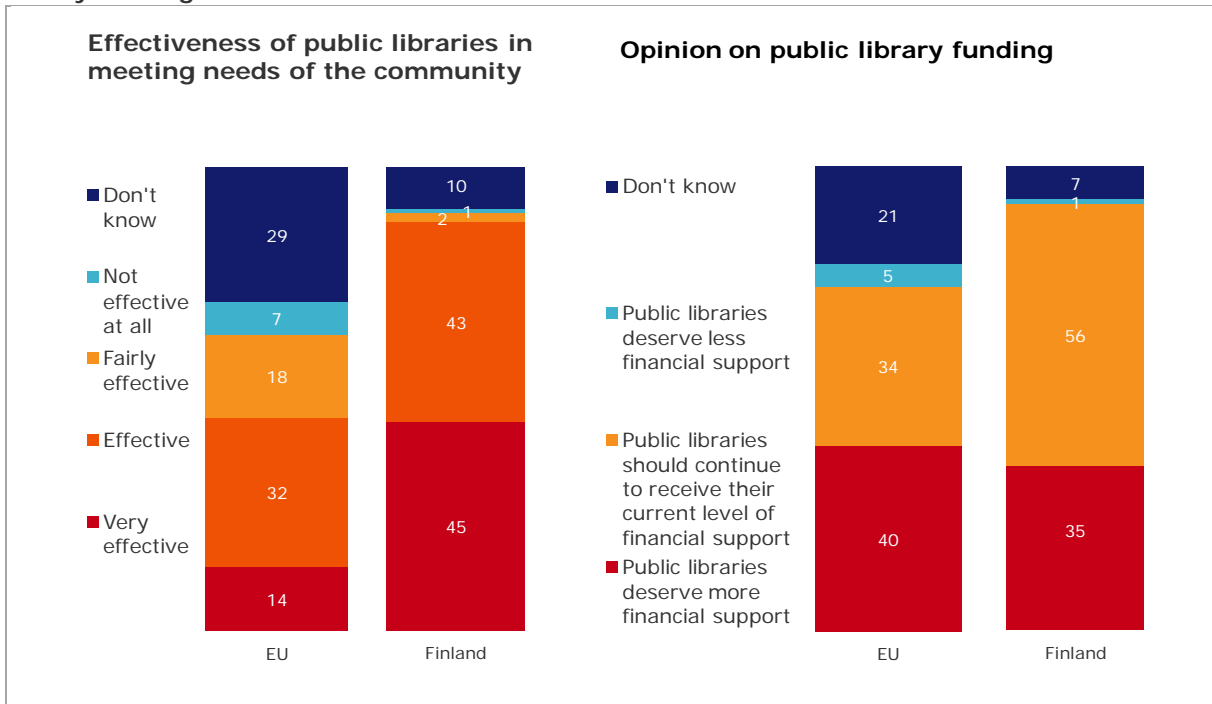
Nine in ten (90%) of the general public in Finland (including both library users and non-users) felt libraries were either very effective, effective or fairly effective at meeting the needs of their local community. This was considerably higher than the average across the 17 EU survey countries of 64%. The proportion saying libraries were 'very effective' was exceedingly high in Finland, at 45%, against the EU average of 14%.

Library users in Finland and PAC users were almost unanimous in their opinion that libraries were effective in meeting the needs of their local community – 96% of all library users felt they were effective, as did 96% of PAC users.

Around a third (35%) of the public in Finland felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, which was lower than the average of all 17 EU countries (40%). Almost all the remainder either felt that the funding should continue as at present (56%) or did not express an opinion (7%). Only 1% of the public in Finland felt that public libraries deserve *less* financial support. These findings are perhaps not surprising, given above average public library spending in Finland and the fact that Finland is known for its efficient, accessible and cost-effective library services.

Not surprisingly, library users and PAC users were more likely than non-users to say that libraries deserve more financial support – 40% of all library users, and 40% of PAC users, were in favour of more financial support for libraries.

Figure 7: Effectiveness of public libraries in meeting community needs and opinion on public library funding



Source: Omnibus survey- Q6 How effective do you think your local public library is at meeting the needs of your community? & Q7 Which of the following statements represents most closely your opinion regarding the current funding for public libraries?.

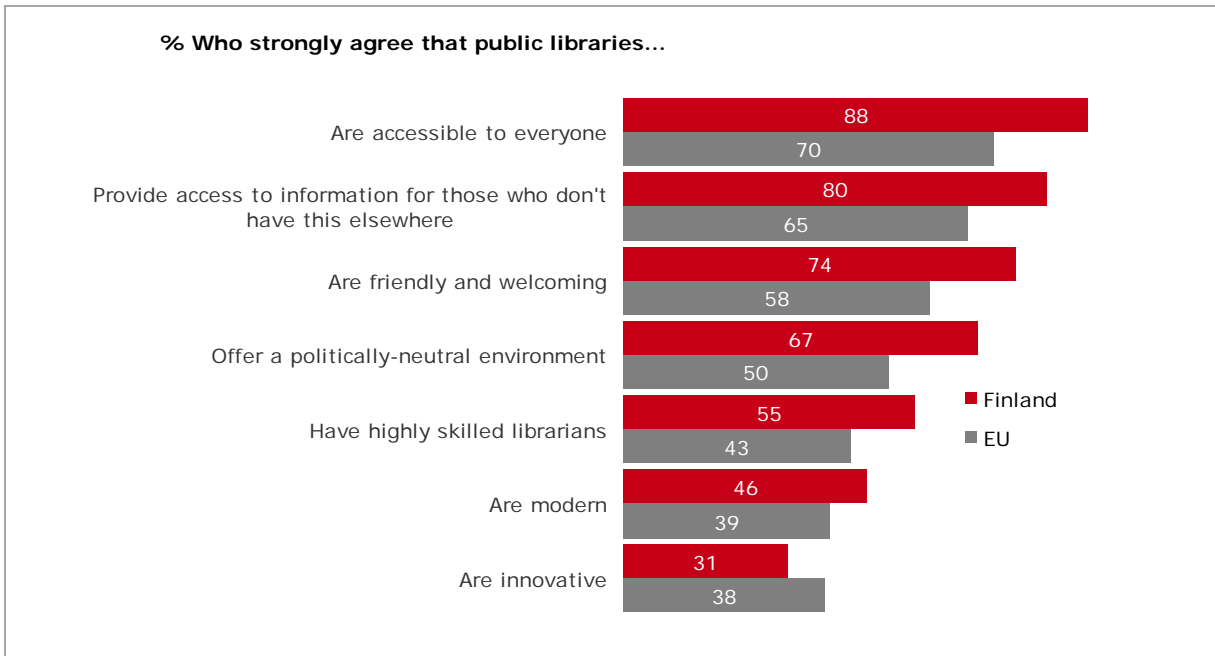
Base: All adults - Finland (1008); EU (17816)

4.3 Perceptions of public libraries

All library users were asked their opinions of public libraries, through a series of agree/disagree statements. Figure 8 shows the proportions in Finland and EU who strongly agreed with each of these statements. Library users in Finland were more likely than the EU average to strongly agree with all of these statements, with the biggest differences from the EU average for 'Are accessible to everyone' (88% Finland compared with 70% EU), 'Offer a politically neutral environment' (67% Finland compared with

50% EU), 'Are friendly and welcoming' (74% Finland compared with 58% EU) and 'provide access to information to those who don't have this elsewhere' (80% Finland, 65% EU).

Figure 8: Perceptions of public libraries



Source: Library survey- C29 How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements.
 Base: All library users. Finland (1443); EU (24253)

5. Informal and non-formal learning

Public libraries are key players in the delivery of the non-formal/informal component of the European Commission's lifelong learning policy, particularly with regard to *inclusive* delivery. The role of libraries in providing education to users was explored through asking all library users whether or not they had taken part in any educational activities in a public library within the last 12 months.

Overall, in Finland 23% had taken part in one of the educational activities in libraries asked about in the last 12 months, which was slightly below the EU average of 25%.

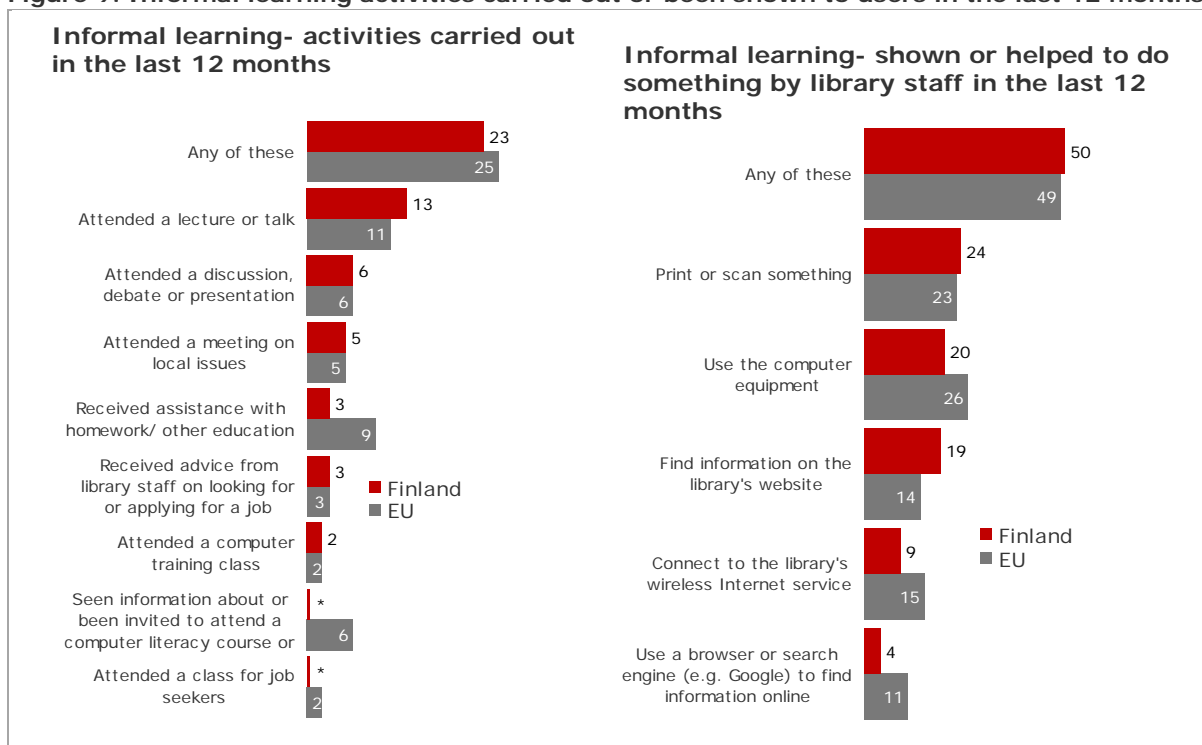
Engagement levels in most educational activities in libraries tended to be similar in Finland to the EU as a whole (Figure 9), including, among others:

- Attending a lecture or talk (13% vs. EU average of 11%)
- Attending a discussion, debate or presentation (6% vs. EU average of 6%)
- Attending a meeting on local issues (5% vs. EU average of 5%)

Only three per cent of library users in Finland said they had assistance with homework or other education, however, compared with the EU average of 9%.

Two per cent of library users in Finland reported that they had attended a computer training class in the last 12 months – the same as the EU average. This means that c.45, 000 adults in Finland attended a computer training class in a library in the last 12 months.

Figure 9: Informal learning activities carried out or been shown to users in the last 12 months



Source: Library survey-C16 In the last 12 months, have you done any of the following things in a public library & C17 In the last 12 months, have you been shown how or helped to do any of the following things by staff at a public library...

Base: C16- All library users - Finland (1443); EU (24253). C17- All PAC users – Finland (713); EU (11716).

As Figure 9 shows, public library staff play an important role in assisting library users in informal learning. Overall, a half (50%) library users in Finland had been shown or helped to do something by a member of library staff within the last 12 months, on a par with the EU average of 49%.

The most common ways in which library staff assisted library users were helping with printing or scanning, using the computer and finding information on the library's website.

The qualitative research found that support and advice from staff was almost unanimously viewed positively, and library personnel were mainly assessed as being helpful and professionally skilled. Having them around was considered an important advantage; almost all respondents had received some kind of support or help with problems at some time during their ICT usage. It was also possible to utilize a service which had been developed called "Book a librarian", which meant it was possible for the user to reserve a certain time with a librarian for any kind of ICT guidance. Library staff had been able to help users with issues including how to print, copy a CD, use the internet, transfer pictures from a memory stick and use scanners, laptops and smartphone applications. However there was found to be considerably less personnel with ICT expertise available in semi-rural libraries than urban libraries.

More specific types of training identified by users included courses on usage of email, Google and Facebook, data format conversions and picture processing. It was felt that training staff's skills and professional competence in ICT was important to make them good trainers, including a masters' level degree and suitable subject, such as information science.

Some managers explained that their ICT services were designed based on requests from users, with their aim being to offer courses on those issues that their users found useful but challenging in their own lives. Their whole operation was built bottom-up in this sense. They also collected feedback after each course to develop them further.

6. Use of PACs for employment and business

Public libraries have a role to play not only in providing a community gateway to higher level skills – but also to employment, and therefore the role of the public library in helping Europeans access employment opportunities was a key theme within the research.

A quarter (25%) of PAC users in Finland had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, in line with the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 0.2 million PAC users in Finland who had used PAC for employment related activity.

Overall, 4% of PAC users in Finland had used a PAC to apply for a job (either in Finland or in another EU country) in the last 12 months - this represents approximately 33,500 adults in Finland. Of those respondents who applied for a job through PAC, 20% said that they were successful. This means that in all 0.8% of PAC users in Finland – or an estimated 7,000 adults– applied for and got a job via a PAC in the last 12 months.

Public library staff have a role to play in supporting employment related PAC activities, as is shown in Figure 10; three percent of PAC users in Finland indicated that they had been shown or helped to do some employment-related PAC activity (lower than the EU average).

Figure 10: Employment related PAC activities carried out in last 12 months

Employment related activities - Used computers in last 12 months to...			Employment related activities - Been shown/helped to... by library staff in the last 12 months		
	%		%		
		Finland		Finland	EU
Any listed below		25		3	11
Find information about searching and/or applying for jobs	9	14	Improve skills needed in your current job	2	4
Search for jobs	7	13	How to write a CV	-	5
Write a CV or covering letter	4	12	How to develop skills needed to obtain a job	-	2
Improve skills needed in your current job	13	11	How to look for a job online (such as finding a recruitment company, searching for information about an employer)	-	3
Apply for jobs in this country	4	10	How to apply for a job online	-	2
Search for information about an employer	4	8	How to look for and apply for jobs in other EU countries	-	1
Find a recruitment company	2	5			
Use spread sheet/data	-	3			
Search for jobs in other EU countries	-	2			
Apply for jobs in other EU countries	-	1			

Source: Library survey-C18 In the last 12 months, have you used the computers available in public libraries to...& C20 In the last 12 months, have you been shown how / helped to do any of the following things by staff at a public library....

Base: All PAC users. Finland (713); EU (11716).

PAC users were asked whether they had used PACs for a range of business-related activities in the last 3 months. Around one in three users in Finland (30%) had used a PAC for finding information related to a business they worked in, which was above the EU average of 20%. Three per cent of PAC users in Finland had used a PAC for participating in professional networks, half the EU average (6%). Two per cent in Finland, compared with 4% EU average, had used a PAC to find ways or places to sell their own products or goods.

Most libraries in the qualitative research had provided training concerning employment, business and e-procurement. Some libraries provided 'urban office' facilities by giving users the space and certain tools, such as Wifi, for them to come and work with their own computers. In addition, they guided users to information sources that would be useful.

"Our social duty is not so much enhancing entrepreneurship per se, that's done elsewhere, but we provide the devices and we guide people if they want to set up a business. We don't have the [business] competence but we guide them to the right sources and see what kind of forms you have to fill in and what kind of places to be in contact with." (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Finland)

Informal support was given to users completing job applications and using online tools for finding jobs.

[Users] are seeking a job and filling applications, and we advise them with this process, on how to find and use [online tools for finding jobs]. Or we advise with an [online] application form that they are filling in...we have been doing this with immigrants, who have been seeking jobs, helping them form sentences and with spelling [in Finnish]."
(Library Manager, Urban, Finland)

One library manager recalled helping a user who ran a company selling music equipment to use image processing software to develop and advertisement for his company.

7. E-government and active citizenship

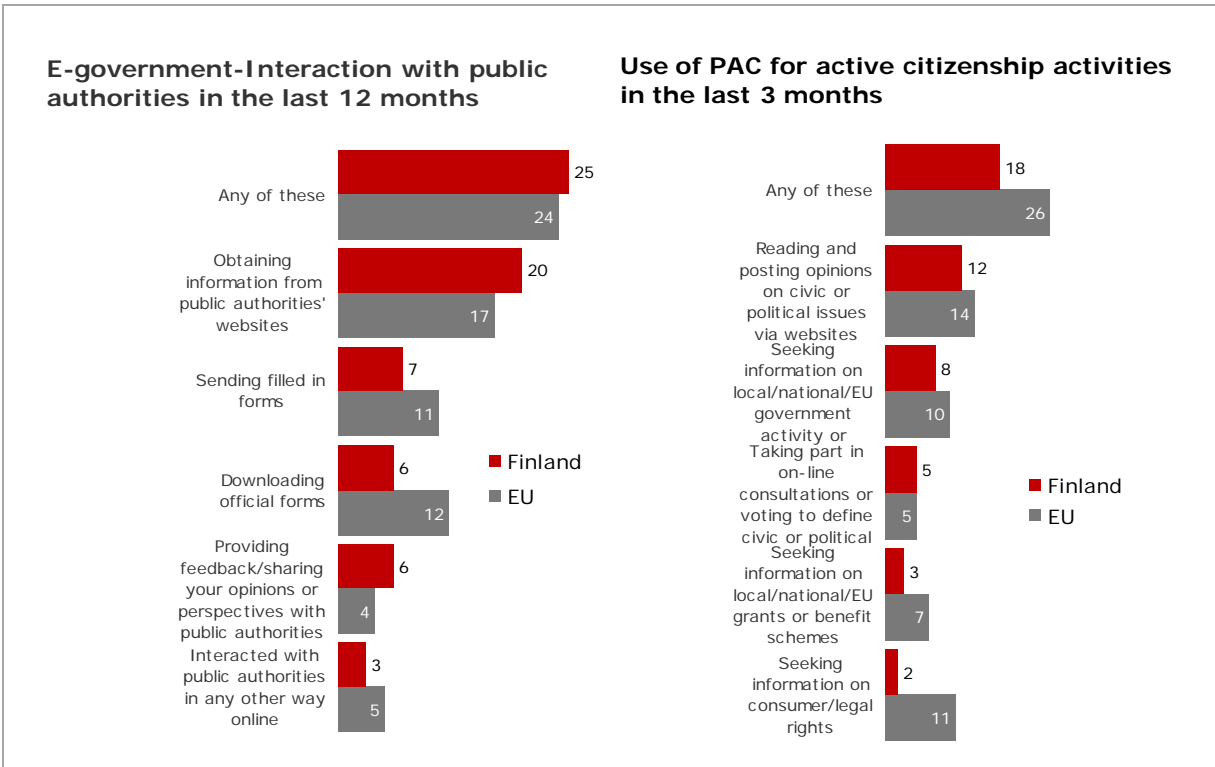
As part of the 'Connecting Europe' agenda, public libraries represent a network of public digital access points which can assist in the effective delivery of access to e-government. Computer users were asked about their interaction with public authorities using PACs, including obtaining information from public authorities' websites, downloading official forms, sending filled in forms, providing feedback/sharing opinions or perspectives with public authorities, and any other way they had interacted with public authorities online.

According to Eurostat data, E-government usage by individuals in Finland is considerably higher than the EU average - 68% of adults in Finland used the internet in the last 12 months to interact with public authorities, compared with 41% across the EU. Citizens in Finland were also more likely than the EU average to use the Internet to obtain information from public authorities' web sites (58% compared with 35%).

The library survey found that a quarter (25%) PAC users in Finland had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, very similar to the EU average of 24% of PAC users having engaged in E-government interaction, but considerably below the Eurostat finding for all adults in Finland. PAC users in Finland were more likely than the EU average to have used PACs to obtain information from public authorities' websites (20% Finland compared with 17% EU) and less likely to have used PACs to send in filled in forms (7% in Finland compared with 11% EU).

PAC users were also asked about their use of PACs for activities related to civic engagement and active citizenship (Figure 11). This covered areas such as civic participation (reading/posting opinions, taking part in on-line consultations, petitions etc) and seeking information on consumer or legal rights, and on government activity or politics, or grants/benefit schemes. Overall, 18% of PAC users in Finland had used PAC for engagement activities in the past 3 months, lower than the average for users across the EU (26%). The two most common community engagement activities were reading and posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (12% Finland compared with 14% EU) and seeking information on local/national/EU government activity (8% Finland compared with 10% EU).

Figure 11: E-government-Interaction with public authorities in the last 12 months



Source: Library survey-C23 Did you interact with public authorities over the Internet using a computer at a public library for private purposes in the last 12 months for the following activities & C10 For which of the following activities have you used the Internet on computers in public libraries in the last 3 months...
 Base: All PAC users. Finland (713); EU (11716)

In the qualitative research, e-government was often stressed as an important part of the library's ICT support. Libraries' basic courses in ICT often included the use of government-related websites and completing social security forms and tax deductions cards. Staff noted that their support in this area encouraged users of ICT to resolve e-government issues which they might not otherwise progress.

"That is a part of our core stuff. That is something we do with our users all the time, we try to figure out [e-] forms and look where they are to be found [online]. [...] [The benefit for our users] here is that when they have an important monetary issue or application that they must get forward and might lack knowledge or courage to do it at the bureau in question – here the rescue is often found at the library. That's where the benefit comes directly." (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Finland)

The elderly and immigrants were mentioned here as important user groups who benefitted greatly from the library's support with e-government:

"Clearly the immigrants who are still learning their societal skills in Finland [are benefitting]. The work done on social integration is really good, but there are always small details, which are forgotten or are totally newly faced." (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Finland)

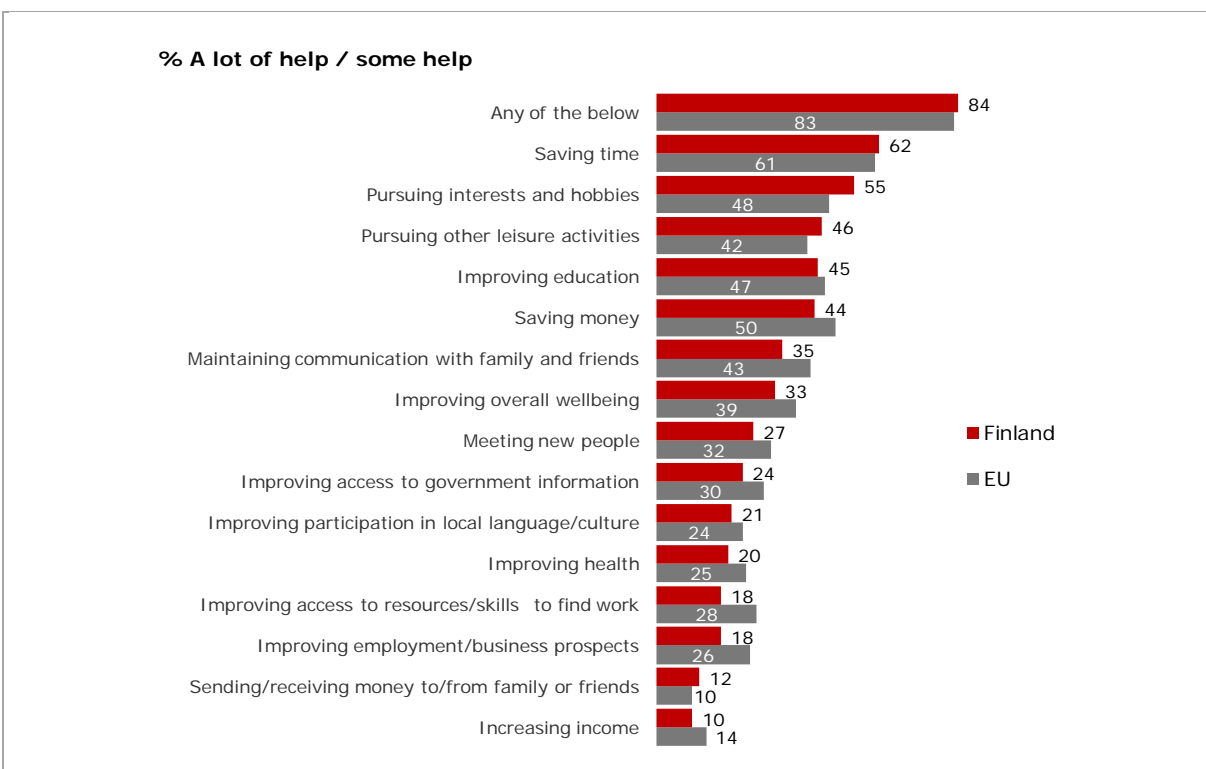
8. Impacts

A key aim of this research was to evaluate the impact of increased digital engagement through PAC use for users. This was assessed by asking PAC users how helpful using computers at public libraries had been for them in the last 12 months, across a wide range of areas including saving time and money, and increasing access to information and resources.

Overall 84% of PAC users in Finland said their PAC use had been helpful to them in at least one of the areas asked about, similar to the average across the EU (83%), which represents approximately 0.7 million people in Finland.

Figure 12 shows the proportions saying PAC use had been helpful in each area, in Finland and across the EU.

Figure 12: Impact of PAC for users



Source: Library survey- C28 In the last 12 months, has using computers at public libraries been helpful to you in the following areas?

Base: C28- PAC users- Finland (713); EU (11716).

As well as the general area of saving time (62% Finland, 61% EU), PAC use was rated as helpful across a range of leisure and social areas such as pursuing interests and hobbies (55% Finland, 48% EU) and pursuing other leisure activities (46% Finland, 42% EU). 44% of PAC users in Finland (50% in EU) said PAC was helpful in saving money, which represents an estimated 0.4 million PAC users in Finland.

Overall it is estimated that in Finland, PAC usage in the last 12 months helped:

- 0.4 million people to improve their education
- 0.2 million people to improve their access to government information services
- 0.2 million people to improve their employment or business prospects
- 0.1 million people to improve their access to resources necessary to find work
- 85,000 people to increase their income.

In the qualitative research, users cited various benefits of ICT usage in libraries including greater confidence in using basic functions of ICT, being able to keep in touch with friends and relatives all over the world; improved skills in job-hunting; acquiring and developing hobbies and skills such as languages and being able to play games on computers. Some older participants credited the library with enabling them to use ICT devices and programs at all, and reported being able to use ICT quite confidently as a result of the support received at the library.

"My reason [for the first experience of using ICT in the library] was that I had become unemployed and needed to have an email account – one can't be a member of society without having one." (User, woman, 40-64 years, Finland)

"The library has made it possible for me to use the internet in searching information about my hobbies." (User, woman, 40-64 years, Finland)

"I have managed to learn new languages which have been essential at my job. I am now a much more confident ICT user." (User, man, 65 years and over, Finland)

Digitisation services had also benefitted users who had materials in old and decaying forms, often containing important documents such as family photos which were in need of digitization.

The library was seen by many as one of the few low-threshold places where people with poor ICT skills could start from scratch and learn these skills in a non-competitive atmosphere, helping to reduce marginalization of particular groups in society.

"[The main benefit is] a democratic society, where people know how to take part, make an impact and take a stance. A civil society, where marginalization is [fought against] as much as possible. Equality and democracy are pretty important values. [...] Library is still a low-threshold place to come and say 'I don't know how'. If you go to a community college or such, you always start noting that others seem to know much more and start comparing. The atmosphere is totally different." (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Finland)

Immigrants and the elderly were mentioned as the user groups most likely to benefit from ICT support in this way. It was explained that the elderly often needed encouragement to use modern technology, which was sometimes vital for their lives.

"[Library's ICT services] are of great help to older people, who have not learned these skills at school or work. We have introduced an amazing amount of people to using a computer. First on basic level courses and then going on to our advanced courses." (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Finland)

Other groups seen to benefit particularly from library ICT services were those who could not afford to acquire ICT technology and competence. Here libraries saw their purpose as promoting literacy and social equality:

"This [the library's ICT services] is exactly for these [information technological] civics. We are ensuring social equality." (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Finland)