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

Final report

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Disclaimer

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 Greece and compares the results to the EU total.

The public library landscape

- The desk research estimates that there are 491 public libraries in Greece, or 0.4 per 10,000 population, which when compared to the average of 1.3 libraries per 10,000 population across the EU, is well below the average.
- Computer access is offered by an estimated 80% of public libraries in Greece.

Library and PAC usage

- An estimated 0.9 million adults in Greece, around one in ten adults in the country (9%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, significantly below the EU average of 23%.
- An estimated 0.2 million adults in Greece, 2% of adults, had used PACs in the last 12 months, significantly lower than the average of 4% of adults across the EU.
- PAC users in Greece were more likely than the EU average to be aged 15-24, to live in towns rather than rural areas, and to still be studying.
- The primary motivation of PAC users in Greece and across the EU is the free nature of the service. Users in Greece were less likely than the EU average to say they had no other option to computer access (10% Greece, 19% EU) or internet access (9% Greece, 19% EU).
- Overall, it is estimated that 35,000 PAC users in Greece had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.
- The value placed on the PAC service was slightly higher among users in Greece than the EU average. Overall, 96% of PAC users in Greece said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users.
- Satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users: 87% of users in Greece were satisfied.

Perceptions and impacts of public libraries

- More than nine out of ten library users in Greece considered 'free access to computers' and 'free access to the internet' important (compared with around seven out of ten library users across Europe).
- Over half (56%) of the general public in Greece (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 lower than the average across the EU of 64%.
- Over three fifths (62%) of the public in Greece felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, which was higher than the EU average (40%).
- Overall 96% of PAC users in Greece said their PAC use had delivered at least one impact for them, higher than the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 120,000 people in Greece.

Informal and non-formal learning

- In Greece 39% of library users had taken part in an educational activity in a library in the last 12 months, which was higher than the EU average of 25%.

Employment and use of PACs for business

- Around two fifths (41%) of PAC users in Greece had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, above the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 50,000 PAC users in Greece who had used PAC for employment related activity.
- An estimated 8,500 PAC users in Greece had used a PAC to apply for a job in the last 12 months, and an estimated 1,000 adults were successful in securing employment by this means.

E-government and active citizenship

- The library survey found that over a quarter PAC users in Greece (27%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, slightly higher than the EU average of one in four (24%). The most common ways in which PAC users in Greece interacted with public authorities were to obtain information from public authorities' websites (18%) and to download official forms (18%).
- Overall, 44% of PAC users in Greece had used PAC for civic engagement activities in the past 3 months, higher 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 (34% Greece compared with 14% EU) and seeking information on local/national/EU government activity (21% Greece 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 development[1]. 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.

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[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 1,000 members of the public aged 15+ in Greece (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 Greece, 701 interviews were conducted with people who had not used Public Access Computers (PACs) in libraries (12,537 across the 17 countries) and 714 with those who had (11,716 across the 17 countries). The interviews in Greece were conducted in 27 libraries which were selected and contacted with help from a representative of the National Library of Greece. 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 Greece 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 report[5].

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 Greece 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 Greece are *included* in the EU average, which has the effect of lessening the statistical power of comparisons between the Greece 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 Greece and are presented in terms of estimated numbers.

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[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)

2.   The public library landscape and internet provision

There are an estimated 491 public libraries in Greece (2012), which equates to 0.4 libraries per 10,000 population, compared with an average across the 17 EU countries of 1.3 libraries per 10,000 population.

In general, most public libraries in Greece get very little funding. Local authorities are totally responsible for the funding of Municipal libraries. On the other hand, the 46 public libraries are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

Public libraries in Greece are divided into three categories:

- Those governed and supported by the Ministry of Education, (46 "dimosies" public libraries in Greece, one of them being the National Library).
- Municipal libraries that are the responsibility of the local authorities and are financed by them
- Children's libraries – these are also supported by the Ministry of Education.

The Council of Public Libraries, National Archives and Educational Television is the only consulting body on library matters at the Ministry of Education which is responsible for the operation of public libraries financed by this Ministry and for the National Archives Service. The council does not have authority on financing or on other form of libraries. New legislation on forming a central library authority is under discussion.

Mention should be made of the Public library of Veria as a flagship library and the one that has achieved the most in Greece. This library has 41% of the population as active users and has been able to reach out to the community and address their needs. They have been awarded many grants, including USD 1m from the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation.

Computer access is offered by an estimated 80% of public libraries in Greece. The proportion of public libraries with internet access in Greece is estimated at 70-75%.

Eurostat data (2011) for Internet access at home shows that Greece has one of the lower levels in Europe, with 50% 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 higher in Greece 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 Greece was below the EU average.

- An estimated 0.9 million adults in Greece, under a tenth of adults in Greece (9%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 0.4 million adults, just 4% of adults in Greece, 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 Greece and across the EU, is shown in Figure 1. In Greece:

- Women (11%) were more likely than men (7%) to have visited a library, in line with the findings across the EU.
- Library usage in Greece was highest among those aged 15-24 (16%) as was the case with the EU average. Then in Greece, usage was largely consistent across the other age bands (9% of those aged 25-39, 9% of those aged 40-54, 7% of those aged 55-64 and 4% of those aged 65 and over. Overall, library usage levels in Greece were lower than the average levels for EU.
- Library use was slightly higher in smaller towns (13%) than in large towns and cities (8%) or rural areas (6%).
- Library use was higher among those who were still studying – 17% of this group had used a public library in the last 12 months, but still considerably lower than the EU average.

Figure 1: Used a public library in the last 12 months
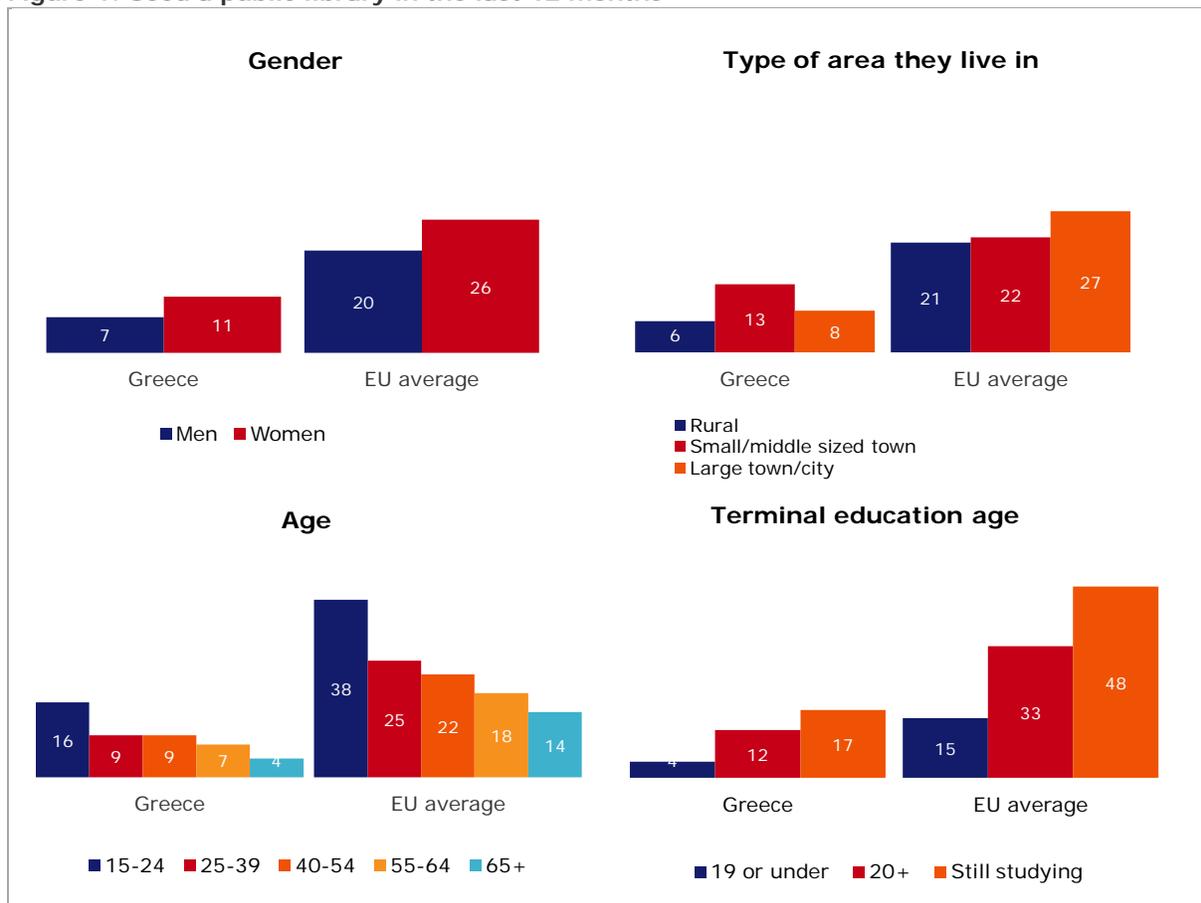
Source: Omnibus survey – Q1. Have you visited a public library in the last 12 months?
Base: Greece – All adults (1000), Men (500), Women (500), 15-24 (167), 25-39 (253), 40-54 (295), 55-64 (144), 65+ (138), Large town/city (425), Small town (367), Rural area (201), Finished education 19 or under (431), 20 or over (392), Still studying (152). 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 Greece, compared with across the EU, was:

- 41% of library users in Greece were men, 59% women; on a par with the EU average (42% men, 58% women)
- users in Greece had a slightly younger age profile than the EU average – 30% were aged 15-24, 25% aged 25-39, 29% aged 40-54, 11% aged 55-64 and 5% aged 65+; compared with the EU

average of 25% aged 15-24, 26% aged 25-39, 25% aged 40-54, 12% aged 55-64 and 12% aged 65+.

Almost a sixth (14%) of those who had visited a library in Greece in the last 12 months used a PAC, exactly the same as the EU average of 14%. When those who had not used a PAC were asked why this was, 48% said they had no need to because they had a computer/internet at home and a significant minority of 6% said they did not know how to use computers or the internet, implying that there is potential for libraries to further increase their customer base for PAC.

In total, the survey found that 2% of adults in Greece had used PACs in the last 12 months, lower than the average of 4% of adults across the EU countries. This is estimated to be around 0.2 million adults within Greece.

PAC users in Greece were more likely than the EU average to be aged 15-24, to live in towns rather than rural areas and to be still studying, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Profile of those who had used a PAC in the last 12 months
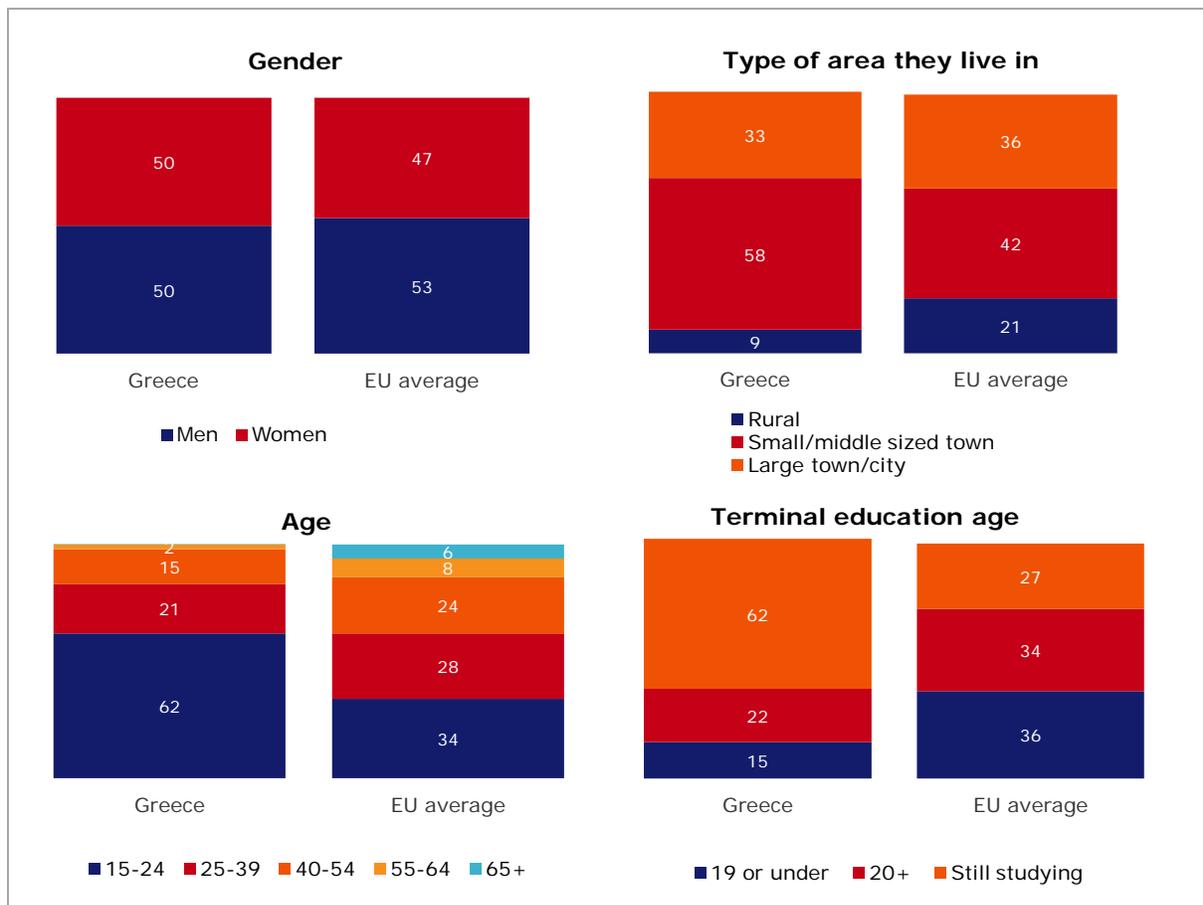
Source: Library survey – C4. Have you used a public access computer in a public library to access the Internet in the last 12 months?
Base: All PAC users Greece (714), EU (11716).

Close to half of users in Greece (45%) had used PACs once every three months or less often, similar to the EU average (47%). 18% of PAC users in Greece made use of PACs at least once a week, compared with 23% across the EU, with 37% doing so once to three times a month (compared to 29% in the EU).

In the qualitative research, library managers described a variety of means by which they were working to encourage use of PACs among its communities. They reported that there was little need to actively encourage most people, as they came of their own accord (in these financially hard times especially, as less people had internet at home and therefore came to the library instead.) However, they made efforts to engage with their local areas about the ICT provisions available in the library through leaflets, announcements in the library site or in the general area.

There was a greater challenge attracting more difficult to reach groups within the community, e.g. older people, people with disabilities, unemployed, ethnic minorities, as accessibility and/or tailored ICT provisions were limited or lacking. For example, in some libraries there were no ramps for those with disabilities, or no specialized training or programs for unemployed / jobseekers. One library had carried out some initiatives, e.g. sending letters to blind people, to let them know about the Braille equipped computers, and having a bus in the local area to pick up those with special needs or disabled people to take them to the library, however they had had limited success with these so far. Other libraries sought to provide the basics, e.g. ramps for the disabled, before looking to innovative approaches to encourage these groups to use the ICT services.

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 Greece and across the EU, the primary motivation for PAC users is the free nature of the service. PAC users in Greece' next motivation for using public library computers was the ability it gave them for working or being with friends or other people (Greeks were much more likely than those in other countries to say this - 29% in Greece compared with 12% across the EU).

Figure 3: Main reasons for using computers in libraries

Free Internet access — EL: 64, EU: 33
To work or be with friends or other people — EL: 29, EU: 12
To get help from library staff — EL: 16, EU: 7
Faster Internet than at home or work — EL: 16, EU: 8
No other option for computer access — EL: 10, EU: 19
No other option for Internet access — EL: 9, EU: 19
Better computer hardware/software than at home or work — EL: 8, EU: 5

Legend: ■ EL ■ EU
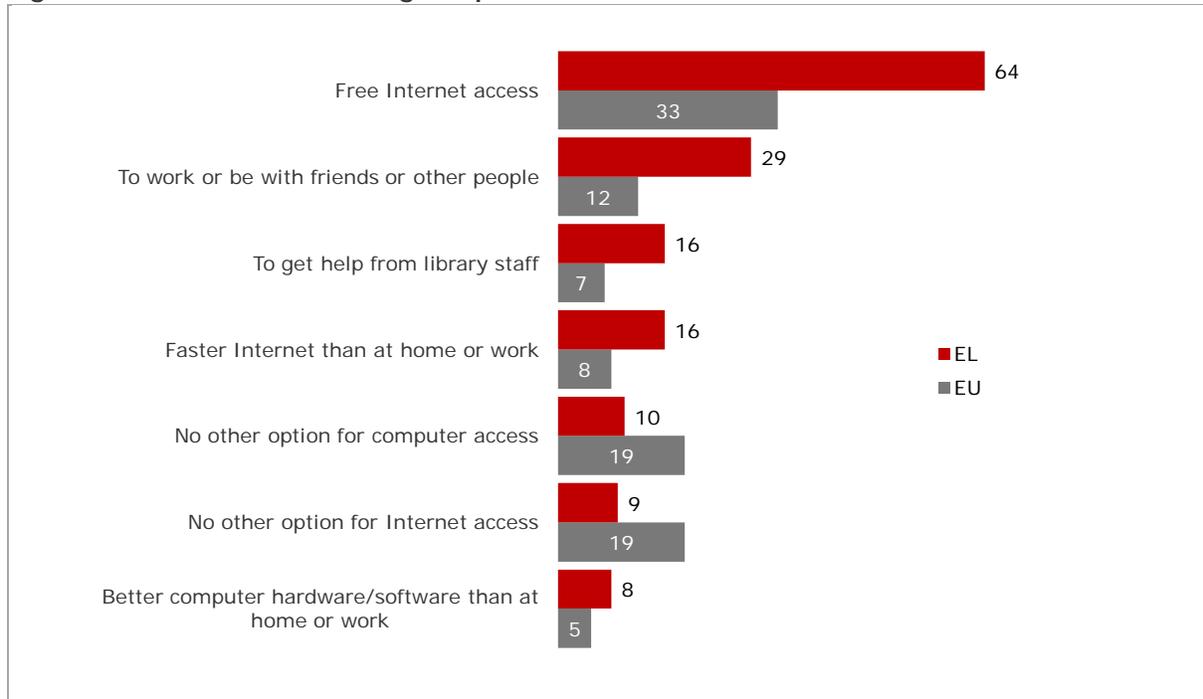
Source: Library Survey - C8 What are the main reasons you have chosen to use computers, Internet and software at public libraries in the last 12 months?
Base: All PAC users- Greece (714); EU (11716)

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 Greece, 5% of PAC users said that they had no other options for accessing the internet (compared with 11% across the EU), and a further 24% that there was no other source of free internet for them (compared with 14% across the EU). Overall, it is estimated that c.35,000 PAC users in Greece (29% of PAC users) had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.

In the qualitative research also, PAC users were asked about the main reasons for using ICT in libraries. They gave a mixture of reasons, primarily the lack of facilities at home (no computer, no internet or both) which was often due to not being able to afford to buy hardware/internet connection, the social aspect of the library experience, and convenience.

> "*I can't afford paying any more for internet at home, I got fired 3 months ago and so my life has changed (Recent first time user, Male, 25-39, Greece)*
>
> "*I come here and I talk with people, I can't stay alone at home in front of my computer"*

In the library survey, the value placed on the PAC service was slightly higher among users in Greece than the EU average, as shown in Figure 4. Overall, 96% of PAC users in Greece said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users. Similar proportions of PAC users in Greece (35%) and EU PAC users (36%) said the service was extremely valuable.

Satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users, as shown in Figure 4: 87% of users in Greece were satisfied. The proportion of users in Greece who were very satisfied was slightly lower than EU users as a whole; 34% of users in Greece, compared with just under a half (47%) across the EU.

Figure 4: Value placed on PACs by users and satisfaction with PACs
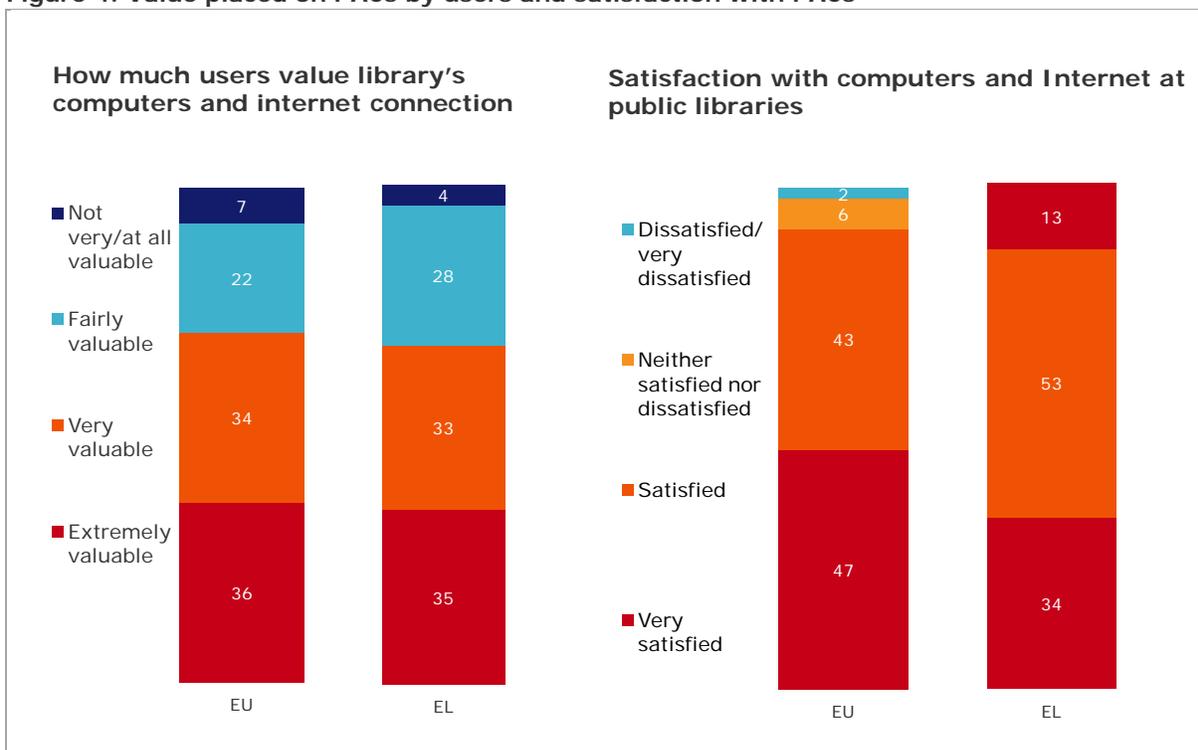
Source: Library survey - C30 How much do you value the library's computers and Internet connection? & C31 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your access to computers and the Internet at public libraries?
Base: All PAC users. Greece (714); EU (11716)

In Greece, three-fifths of PAC users (60%) said that when they go to a library to use a computer, they find a free computer straight away, and a further 31% 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 PACs and other hardware/software available varied by library – ranging from 2 to 20. One library had three PACs specifically for people with special needs, with screens with Braille system and other facilities that made it easy to use.

Just as these ICT provisions varied per library, similarly, according to reports from library and senior library managers, their reliability also depended on the individual library. In three of the five libraries covered under this research, PACs and hardware/software were not deemed to be sufficiently up to date, e.g. with old versions of Windows, in the others they worked reliably and had been upgraded. Overall, library managers/senior library managers estimated 6 out of 10 PACs were working reliably.

Users largely agreed with these views, although overall they felt that less PACs worked reliably compared to library/senior library managers (they estimated 4 out of 10). Several mentioned that they were

geared towards 'basic' use, which could be limiting for some with a higher level of ICT needs. Specific aspects which they wanted to see improved included the printers (they wanted to see the number of these increased as well as the reliability), and the provision of additional computer hardware e.g. headphones, webcams.

> *"The hardware and software is for people that have no clue for computers and want to do only basic things such as send an email. I have advanced knowledge on computers and I can't do what I want." (Recent first time user, Male, 25-39, Greece)*

> *"There is only one printer and most of the time without paper and ink, so it's useless" (User, Male, 16-24, Greece)*

Both library managers and users also agreed that in some libraries there were issues regarding internet speed, which was considered insufficient to be able to do some tasks, e.g. download and stream videos.

> *"Usually they get stuck and people do not download or watch videos." (Manager, Urban, Greece)*

Wifi was available in all libraries. Managers reported it was primarily used by students for writing essays, using social media and the internet. Many of the users engaged in the research, although they knew it was available, did not make use of it – for example, because of not having a laptop.

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 5 shows the percentage in Greece, 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 93% of users in Greece (and 94% across the EU).

'Free access to the internet' and 'free access to computers' were both rated as important by over nine out of ten library users in Greece, which was higher than the equivalent figure of around seven out of ten users across Europe.

Figure 5: Importance of services provided by public libraries

Service	EL	EU
Books to read / borrow	93	94
Free access to the Internet	93	71
Free access to computers	92	69
Study materials and text books for adults	87	81
School books and text books for children	85	76
Photocopiers / printers	80	62
Information about / for the local community	75	57
A space where the local community can meet	73	50
Newspapers / magazine to read	64	66
Services to job seekers	64	57
Computer and Internet skills training	60	54
CDs/DVDs to borrow	56	56
Access to information about government services	56	50
Information for businesses	49	47

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

Base: All library users - Greece (1415); EU (24253)

Users in Greece were also more likely than the EU average to rate the provision of computer and Internet skills training as an important service (60% in Greece compared with 54% EU average).

'Study materials/text books for adults 'and 'school books' were also highly rated services by users in Greece (87% and 85% in Greece compared with 81% and 76% EU average).

The importance of libraries to community life was emphasised among library users in Greece. Providing a space where the local community can meet was seen as particularly important among library users in Greece (73% compared with 50% EU average), as was providing information about or for the local community (75% compared with 57% EU average).

In the qualitative research , users described the library environment positively, as 'friendly', 'warm', 'familiar' , 'quiet ' and 'pleasant', with only a few less positive comments (as old fashioned /small.)

4.2   Effectiveness and funding of public libraries

Over a half (56%) of the general public in Greece (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 lower than the average across the 17 EU survey countries of 64%. The proportion saying libraries were 'very effective' was 10% in Greece, against the EU average of 14%.

Library users in Greece and PAC users were almost unanimous in their opinion that libraries were effective in meeting the needs of their local community – 90% of all library users felt they were effective, rising to 92% among PAC users.

Over three-fifths (62%) of the public in Greece felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, which was higher than the average of all 17 EU countries (40%). Almost all the remainder either felt that the funding should continue as at present (18%) or did not express an opinion (13%). Only 8% of the public in Greece felt that public libraries deserve *less* financial support. This is perhaps reflective of the fact that most public libraries in Greece get very little funding and that funding of the municipal libraries is the total responsibility of local authorities.

Not surprisingly, library users and PAC users were even more likely than non-users to say that libraries deserve more financial support – 79% of all library users, and 92% of PAC users, were in favour of more financial support for libraries.

Figure 6: Effectiveness of public libraries in meeting community needs and opinion on public library funding
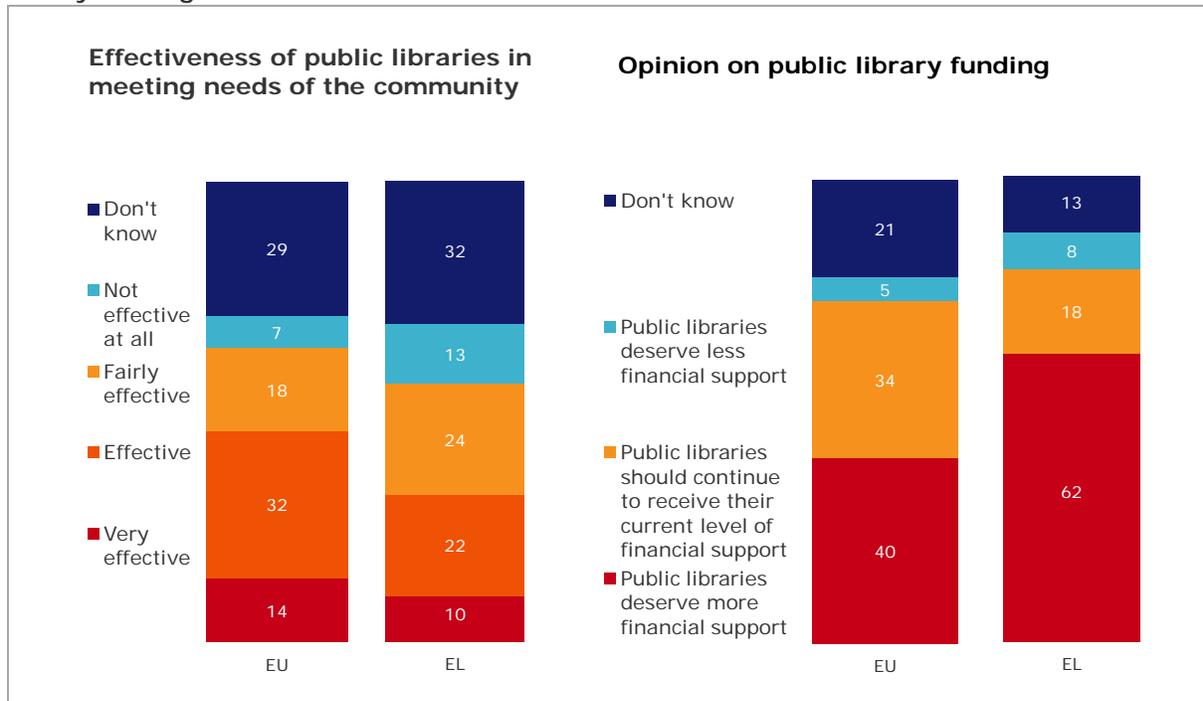
Source: Omnibus survey- Q6 How effective do you think your local public library is at meeting the needs of your community? & Q7 Which of the following statements represents most closely your opinion regarding the current funding for public libraries?.
Base: All adults - Greece (1000); EU (17816)

4.3   Perceptions of public libraries

All library users were asked their opinions of public libraries, through a series of agree/disagree statements. Figure 7 shows the proportions in Greece and EU who strongly agreed with each of these statements. Library users in Greece were most likely to strongly agree with the statements, 'Are accessible to everyone' and 'provide access to information to those who don't have this elsewhere' (70% and 61% respectively.)

Figure 7: Perceptions of public libraries

% Who strongly agree that public libraries…

	EL	EU
Are accessible to everyone	70	70
Provide access to information for those who don't have this elsewhere	61	65
Are friendly and welcoming	52	58
Offer a politically-neutral environment	52	50
Are modern	24	39
Are innovative	29	38
Have highly skilled librarians	38	43
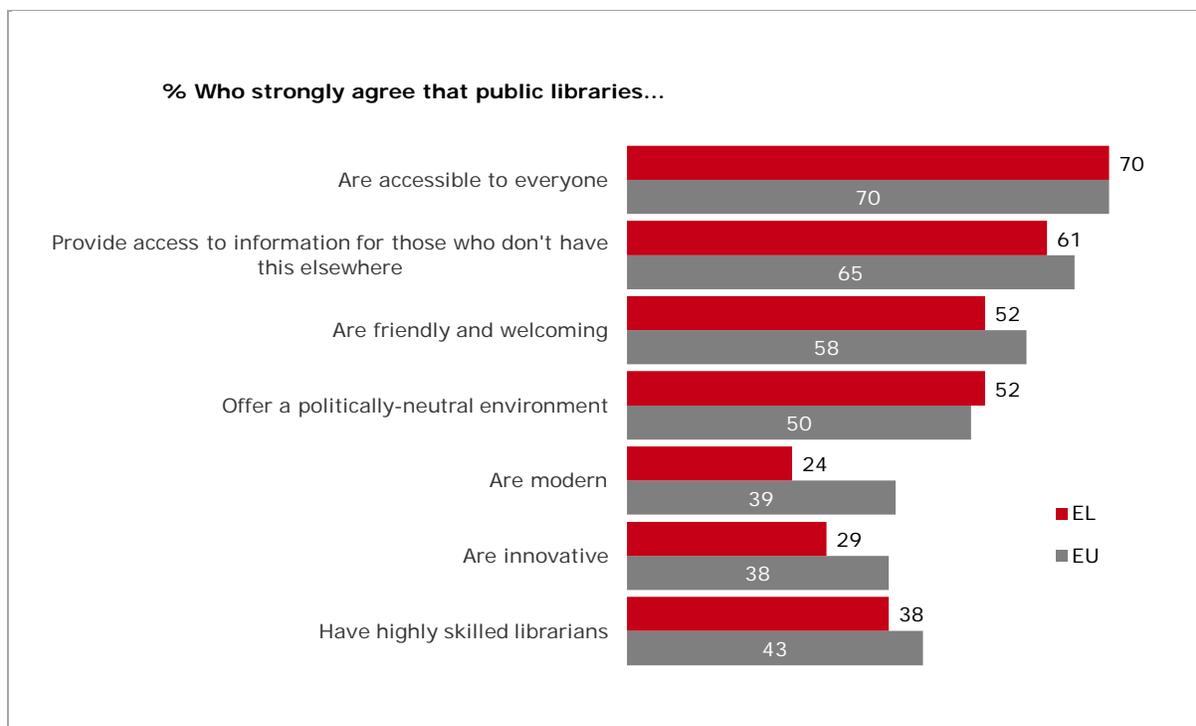
Source: Library survey- C29 How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements..
Base: All library users. Greece (1415); EU (24253)

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 Greece 39% had taken part in one of the educational activities in libraries asked about in the last 12 months, which was above the EU average of 25%.

Engagement levels in all educational activities in libraries tended to be higher in Greece than for the EU as a whole (Figure 8), including, among others:
- Receiving assistance with homework or other education 25% vs. EU average of 9%)
- Attending a discussion, debate or presentation (10% vs. EU average of 6%)
- Attending a lecture or talk (9% vs. EU average of 11%)
- Attending a meeting on local issues (8% vs. EU average of 5%)

Five per cent of library users in Greece reported that they had attended a computer training class in the last 12 months – higher than the EU average of 2%. This means that c.45, 000 adults in Greece attended a computer training class in a library in the last 12 months.

Figure 8: Informal learning activities carried out or been shown to users in the last 12 months

Informal learning- activities carried out in the last 12 months

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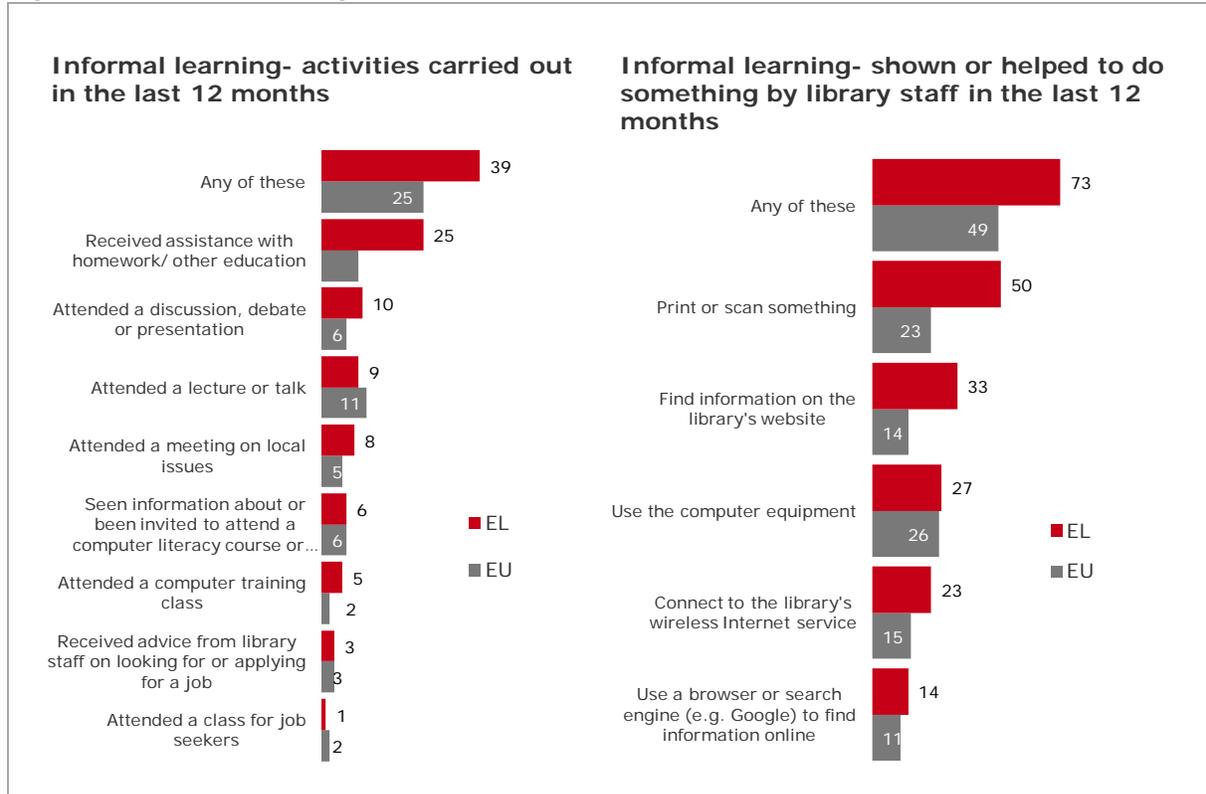
Source: Library survey-C16 In the last 12 months, have you done any of the following things in a public library & C17 In the last 12 months, have you been shown how or helped to do any of the following things by staff at a public library...

Base: C16- All library users - Greece (1415); EU (24253). C17- All PAC users – Greece (714); EU (11716).

As Figure 8 shows, public library staff play an important role in assisting library users in informal learning. Overall, nearly three-quarters (73%) library users in Greece had been shown or helped to do something by a member of library staff within the last 12 months, which was higher than the EU average of 49%.

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

In the qualitative research, users reported instances of support they had received from library staff. In the majority of libraries, library staff played a generalist rather than ICT specific role, therefore this support was limited. Because of this, it was difficult for staff to give advice on anything advanced, e.g. Photoshop software, and there were instances where users' support needs could not be met.

However, there were several examples given of users receiving advice from library staff, for example assistance with printing, writing a Word document, creating a Facebook account and searching for books. Despite the limitations, users found this advice helpful because they learn how to do things, which are important to them.

> "*I didn't know how to print so she came and showed me how to do it.*" *(User, Male, 16-24, Greece)*

Apart from one library, where there were some training courses held, all other libraries engaged in the research did not provide training to users.

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.

Two-fifths (41%) of PAC users in Greece had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, above the EU average of 30%. This represents c.50, 000 PAC users in Greece who had used PAC for employment related activity.

Overall, 7% of PAC users in Greece had used a PAC to apply for a job (either in Greece or in another EU country) in the last 12 months - this represents approximately 8,500 adults in Greece. Of those respondents who applied for a job through PAC, 8% said that they were successful. This means that in all 1% of PAC users in Greece – or an estimated 1,000 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 9; just over one in ten (12%) of PAC users in Greece indicated that they had been shown or helped to do some employment-related PAC activity (a similar proportion to the EU average).

Figure 9: 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		
%	**Greece**	**EU**	**%**	**Greece**	**EU**
Any listed below	**41**	**30**	**Any listed below**	**12**	**11**
Find information about searching and/or applying for jobs	21	14	Improve skills needed in your current job	6	4
Search for jobs	11	13			
Write a CV or covering letter	6	12	How to write a CV	3	5
Improve skills needed in your current job	17	11			
Apply for jobs in this country	7	10	How to develop skills needed to obtain a job	3	2
Search for information about an employer	5	8	How to look for a job online (such as finding a recruitment company, searching for information about an employer)	2	3
Find a recruitment company	3	5			
Use spread sheet/data	5	3	How to apply for a job online	2	2
Search for jobs in other EU countries	5	2			
Apply for jobs in other EU countries	1	1	How to look for and apply for jobs in other EU countries	1	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. Greece (714); EU (11716).

PAC users were asked whether they had used PACs for a range of business-related activities in the last 3 months. One in six users in Greece (16%) had used a PAC for finding information related to a business they worked in, which was slightly below the EU average of 20%. Eight per cent of PAC users in Greece had used a PAC for participating in professional networks, above the EU average (6%). Two per cent in Greece, compared with 4% EU average, had used a PAC to find ways or places to sell their own products or goods.

In the qualitative research, library / senior library managers reported an increase in unemployed people coming to the library, due to the economic crisis. In the majority of libraries, support for this group was limited to informal assistance, e.g. basic help with CVs; one library was able to provide more tailored support, and ran a course specifically for writing CVs, and helping people look for jobs through specific sites. This library reported the positive impacts such help had made on people's job and business opportunities

> "*A man came here, we taught him how to design an e-shop and now he sells things. This is a man who lost his job and we are happy that we helped him find a solution to his problem.*"
> (Manager, Semi Rural, Greece)

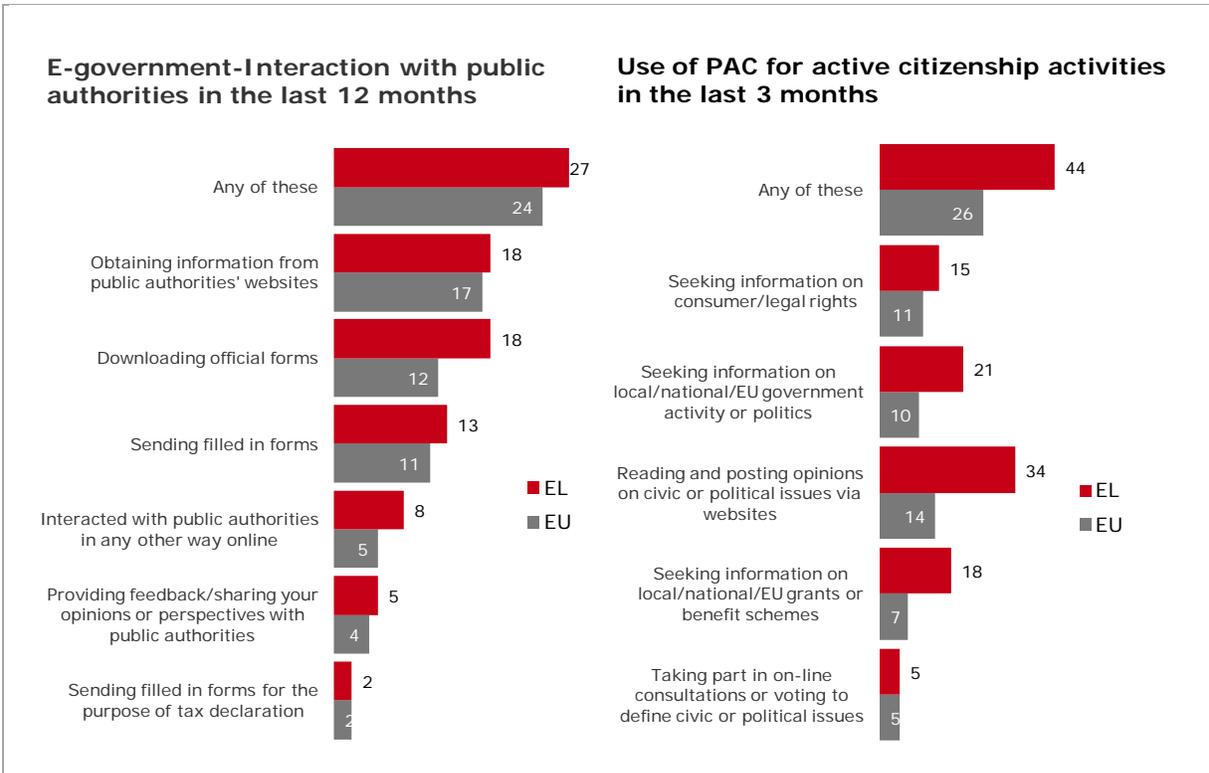## 7. E-government and active citizenship

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. PAC 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 Greece is below the EU average - 27% of adults in Greece used the internet in the last 12 months to interact with public authorities, compared with 41% across the EU. Citizens in Greece were also less likely than the EU average to use the Internet to obtain information from public authorities' web sites (22% compared with 35%).

The library survey found, however, that among PAC users in Greece, over a quarter (27%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months; this was slightly higher than the EU average of one in four (24%) PAC users having engaged in E-government interaction, and the same as the Eurostat finding for all adults in Greece. PAC users in Greece were more likely than the EU average to have used PACs to download forms (18% in Greece compared with 12% EU), and to have obtained information from public authorities' websites (18% Greece compared with 17% EU).

Computer users were also asked about their use of PACs for activities related to civic engagement and active citizenship (Figure 10). 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, 44% of PAC users in Greece had used PAC for engagement activities in the past 3 months, considerably higher 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 (34% Greece compared with 14% EU) and seeking information on local/national/EU government activity (21% Greece compared with 10% EU).

Figure 10: E-government-Interaction with public authorities in the last 12 months

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

Category	EL	EU
Any of these	27	24
Obtaining information from public authorities' websites	18	17
Downloading official forms	18	12
Sending filled in forms	13	11
Interacted with public authorities in any other way online	8	5
Providing feedback/sharing your opinions or perspectives with public authorities	5	4
Sending filled in forms for the purpose of tax declaration	2	2

Use of PAC for active citizenship activities in the last 3 months

Category	EL	EU
Any of these	44	26
Seeking information on consumer/legal rights	15	11
Seeking information on local/national/EU government activity or politics	21	10
Reading and posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites	34	14
Seeking information on local/national/EU grants or benefit schemes	18	7
Taking part in on-line consultations or voting to define civic or political issues	5	5

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. Greece (714); EU (11716)

In the qualitative research, one library reported providing E-government support. In this library, training was provided in various aspects of ICT, one of which was for helping people to fill in their tax return. In other libraries, staff were reticent to provide this support, due to limited knowledge and awareness that processes such as tax returns are 'serious' business.

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.

Almost all PAC users in Greece (96%) said their PAC use had been helpful to them in at least one of the areas asked about. This was higher than the average across the EU (83%) and represents approximately 120,000 people in Greece.

Figure 11 shows the proportions saying PAC use had been helpful in each area, in Greece and across the EU.

Figure 11: Impact of PAC for users

% A lot of help / some help

	EL	EU
Any of the below	96	83
Improving education	85	47
Saving time	81	61
Pursuing interests and hobbies	79	48
Pursuing other leisure activities	76	42
Improving overall wellbeing	73	39
Saving money	73	50
Maintaining communication with family and friends	67	43
Meeting new people	62	32
Improving participation in local language/culture activities	58	24
Improving access to resources/skills to find work	48	28
Improving access to government information and services	47	30
Improving health	47	25
Improving employment/business prospects	44	26
Increasing income	31	14
Sending/receiving money to/from family or friends	13	10

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- Greece (714); EU (11716).

Over four-fifths of PAC users in Greece (85%) rated PAC use as helpful for improving education (47% EU) which represents an estimated 0.1 million PAC users in Greece. As well as this, PAC use was rated as helpful for saving time (81% Greece, 61% EU) and as helpful across a range of leisure and social areas such as pursuing interests and hobbies (79% Greece, 48% EU) and pursuing other leisure activities (76% Greece, 42% EU). 73% of PAC users in Greece (50% EU) said PAC was helpful in saving money, which represents an estimated 90,000 PAC users in Greece.

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

- 100,000 people to improve their education
- 90,000 people to save money
- 60,000 people to improve their access to resources necessary to find work
- 60,000 people to improve their access to government information services
- 55,000 people to improve their employment or business prospects
- 40,000 people to increase their income.

In the qualitative research, users reported some of the benefits they had experienced from using PACs, and the impacts of this on their lives.

Those who were unfamiliar with using ICT prior to coming to the library found that with their improved ICT skills also came increased confidence. As well as this emotional impact, it also had practical advantages, helping them to achieve the tasks required in their work or studies.

> "*I now feel confident using the computers and search on the internet without being afraid which button to press on the keyboard*" (User, Female, 25-39, Greece)

> "*I got a job as a freelancer and I didn't know how to send emails, something very vital for my job. I came here because I didn't have a computer at home and didn't know how to do it. The staff helped me and I was very happy that I did my job.*" (User, Female, 25-39, Greece)

As a whole, users felt ICT helped to expand one's knowledge in various subjects, especially personal interests. They could pursue hobbies further, often with a positive effect not just on the user him/herself but also those around them.

> "*Searching for whatever interests you and finding more and more things about it have an impact on me as I become more knowledgeable in a subject.*" (User, Male 40-64, Greece)

> "*I find recipes and I go back home and cook them for my family! My kids saying, hey mum your food is delicious!*" (Users, Female, 40-64, Greece)

Users also felt that ICT made their lives easier. The availability itself of the PACs and hardware/software was important, especially for those who could not afford to pay for internet at home. Even for those who did have other resources e.g. their own computer at home, having the library as a 'back up' eased their anxiety.

> "*I feel safe, it works like a back up , if something happens to my computer at home, I can do my job here.*" (User, Male, 40-64, Greece)

It also made their daily lives easier in dealing with practicalities, e.g. bookings, and helping them in their work or studies.

> "*I booked a room in a hotel which was very nice and my girlfriend was very pleased.*" (User, Male, 25-39, Greece)

> "*I am a teacher and I prepare the exams for my students on these computers.*" (User, Female, 25-39, Greece)