

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

Final report

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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 Romania and compares the results to the EU total.

The public library landscape

- The desk research estimates that there are 2,876 public libraries in Romania, which equates to 1.4 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 around 65%-70% of public libraries in Romania.

Library and PAC usage

- An estimated 2.9 million adults in Romania, 16% of adults, had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 0.5 million adults in Romania, 3% of adults, had used PACs in the last 12 months, similar to the average of 4% of adults across the EU.
- PAC users in Romania were much more likely than the EU average to be aged 15-24 and to still be studying. They were also more likely to live in a rural area or a large town/city.
- The primary motivation of PAC users across the EU, and even more so in Romania, is the free nature of the service. Users in Romania were also much more likely than the EU average to mention working or being with friends or other people, and getting help from library staff. They were less likely than the EU average to say they had no other option for computer or internet use.
- Overall, it is estimated that 0.1 million PAC users in Romania had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.
- The value placed on the PAC service among users in Romania was broadly similar to the EU average. Overall, 99% of PAC users in Romania said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users. Around two fifths of PAC users in Romania (38%) said the service was extremely valuable, similar to the EU average (36%).
- Satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users: 95% of users in Romania were satisfied.

Perceptions and impacts of public libraries

- More than eight out of ten library users in Romania considered 'free access to computers' and 'free access to the internet' important (compared with around seven out of ten library users across Europe).
- More than three quarters (77%) of the general public in Romania (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 higher than the average across the EU of 64%.
- Just under two thirds (64%) of the public in Romania felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, which was higher than the EU average (40%).
- Overall 89% of PAC users in Romania said their PAC use had delivered at least one impact for them, higher than the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 0.5 million people in Romania.
- Library users in Romania were more likely than the EU average to strongly agree that public libraries 'Are friendly and welcoming' (68% compared with 58% across the EU), 'Are innovative' (52% versus 38%), 'Are modern' (48% versus 39%) and 'Have highly skilled librarians' (51% versus 43%).

Informal and non-formal learning

- In Romania 48% 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 (39%) of PAC users in Romania 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 0.2 million PAC users in Romania who had used PAC for employment related activity.
- An estimated 28,000 PAC users in Romania had used a PAC to apply for a job in the last 12 months, and an estimated 9,000 adults were successful in securing employment by this means.

E-government and active citizenship

- The library survey found that around one in five PAC users in Romania (21%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, slightly lower than the EU average (24%). The most common ways in which PAC users in Romania interacted with public authorities were to obtain information from public authorities' websites (15%) and to download official forms (10%).
- Overall, 43% of PAC users in Romania 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 (25% Romania compared with 14% EU) and seeking information on consumer/legal rights (16% Romania, broadly similar to the EU level of 11%).

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.

The Global Libraries programme of the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation is currently working in five EU countries: Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania. In Romania the foundation is funding the Biblionet National Program – 'The world in my library'. This is one of the most important investments made in a major intervention meant to facilitate public access to the Internet and build a sustainable system of modern public libraries in Romania. Biblionet has a total value of 26.9 million dollars and is implemented by the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) over a five year period. The main objective of the program is to facilitate access to computers and the internet for the Romanian people, given the fact that a large proportion (particularly those in rural areas) do not have internet

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.

access. Through the program over 2,000 public libraries in Romania will receive computers for public access to the internet and more than 3,500 librarians will be trained in the use of technology.

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.

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 1,117 members of the public aged 15+ in Romania (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 Romania, 747 interviews were conducted with people who had not used Public Access Computers (PACs) in libraries (12,537 across the 17 countries) and 749 with those who had (11,716 across the 17 countries). The interviews in Romania were conducted in 50 libraries which were selected and contacted with help from a representative of Biblionet Romania. 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 Romania 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.

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 & Melinda Gates foundation)

Throughout this report comparisons are made between the findings in Romania 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 Romania are included in the EU average, which has the effect of lessening the statistical power of comparisons between the Romania 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 Romania and are presented in terms of estimated numbers.

2. The public library landscape and internet provision

There were 2,876 public libraries in Romania in 2011⁶, which equates to 1.4 libraries per 10,000 population, similar to the average across the 17 EU countries of 1.3 libraries per 10,000.

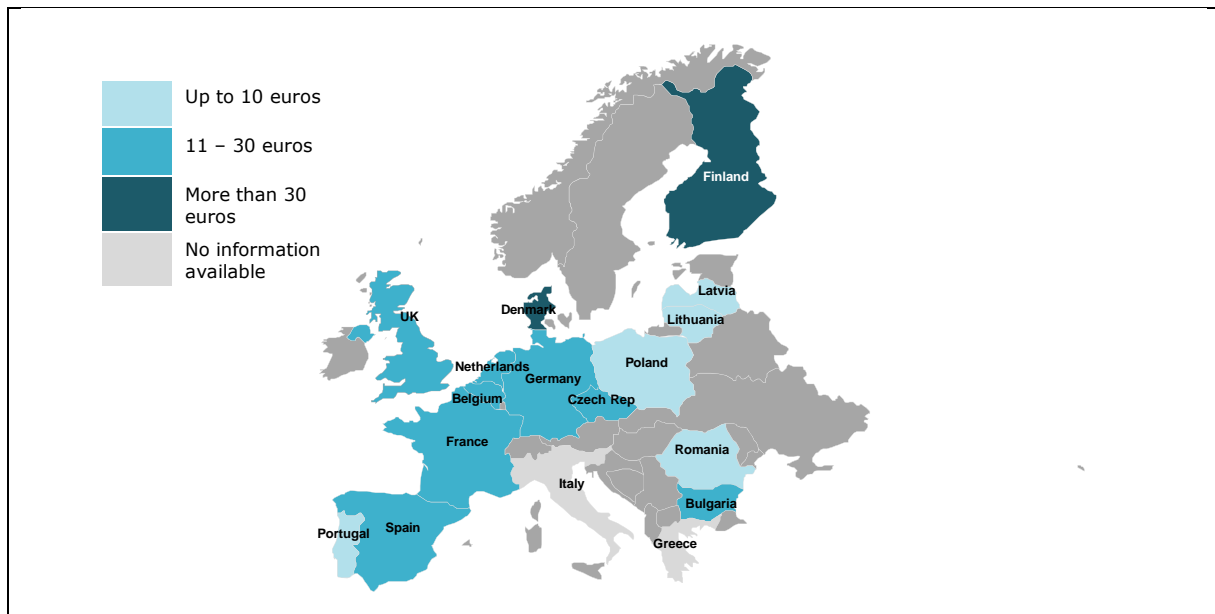
Most of the public libraries in Romania (2,572 in 2,585 locations) are small establishments, located in villages and minor towns. There are 41 county libraries with an additional of 48 branches.

The libraries employed c.5,000 staff (in 2011), with around four fifths of employees made up of specialised staff.

All public libraries in Romania are run by the public authorities (county, city or village level).

Annual public spending on libraries per person in Romania is 7.68 RON (1.8 Euros), well below the average for the other countries included in the study, as shown in the map below:

Figure 1: Annual spending on libraries per capita



Source: TNS desk research

⁶ Source: Institutul National de Statistica – Romanian National Statistics 2011

Libraries in Romania provide many other services in addition to traditional book lending: recreational and leisure; many e-government services; assistance in the writing and submission of projects and extensive promotion of reading and education in all its forms.

To attract visitors and to promote the reading of books, many public libraries organise both traditional cultural events (book launches, poetry nights, reading marathons, reader's theatre) and more innovative events targeting younger people. The main objective is to attract a large numbers of visitors and improve their perceptions of the cultural values of libraries.

Computer access is offered by 65%-70% of libraries in Romania. The proportion of public libraries with Internet access in Romania is estimated to be 65%-70% (up from 42% in 2011).

Eurostat data (2011) on Internet access at home shows that Romania is significantly behind the overall level in Europe, with 47% 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 Romania than in other countries.

3. Library and PAC usage

3.1 Access to libraries and PACs

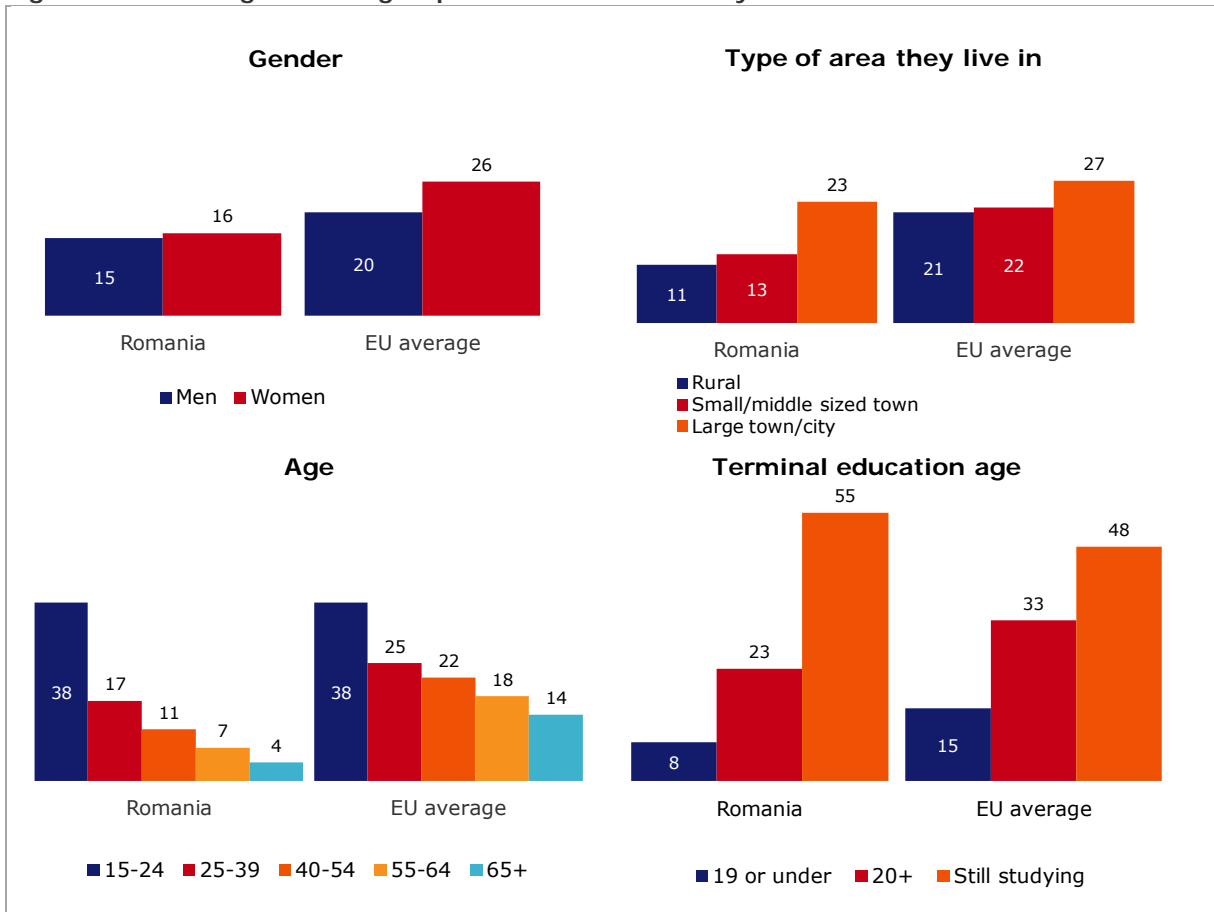
The general public survey found that use of public libraries in Romania was well below the EU average:

- An estimated 2.9 million adults in Romania, just under one in six adults in the country (16%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 1.7 million adults, less than one in ten adults in Romania (9%), had used a library at least once a month, below the EU average of 14%.

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

- Men (15%) and women (16%) were equally likely to have visited a library, in contrast to the findings across the EU where women (26%) were more likely than men (20%) to have done so.
- Library usage was highest among those aged 15-24 (38%), and usage decreased as age increased. Across age groups from age 25-39 and older, library usage in Romania was lower than the comparable EU average.
- Library use was much higher among those who were still studying – over half of this group (55%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, above the EU average (48%).
- Library use was higher in large towns (23%), compared with small/mid-sized towns (13%) and rural areas (11%). Across all three the incidence of usage is lower in Romania than across the EU, with the most notable differences within small/mid-sized towns (EU average 22%) and rural areas (EU average 21%).

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: Romania – All adults (1117), Men (529), Women (592), 15-24 (131), 25-39 (235), 40-54 (302), 55-64 (263), 65+ (186), Large town/city (415), Small town (265), Rural area (4370), Finished education 19 or under (769), 20 or over (279), Still studying (66), 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 Romania, compared with across the EU, was:

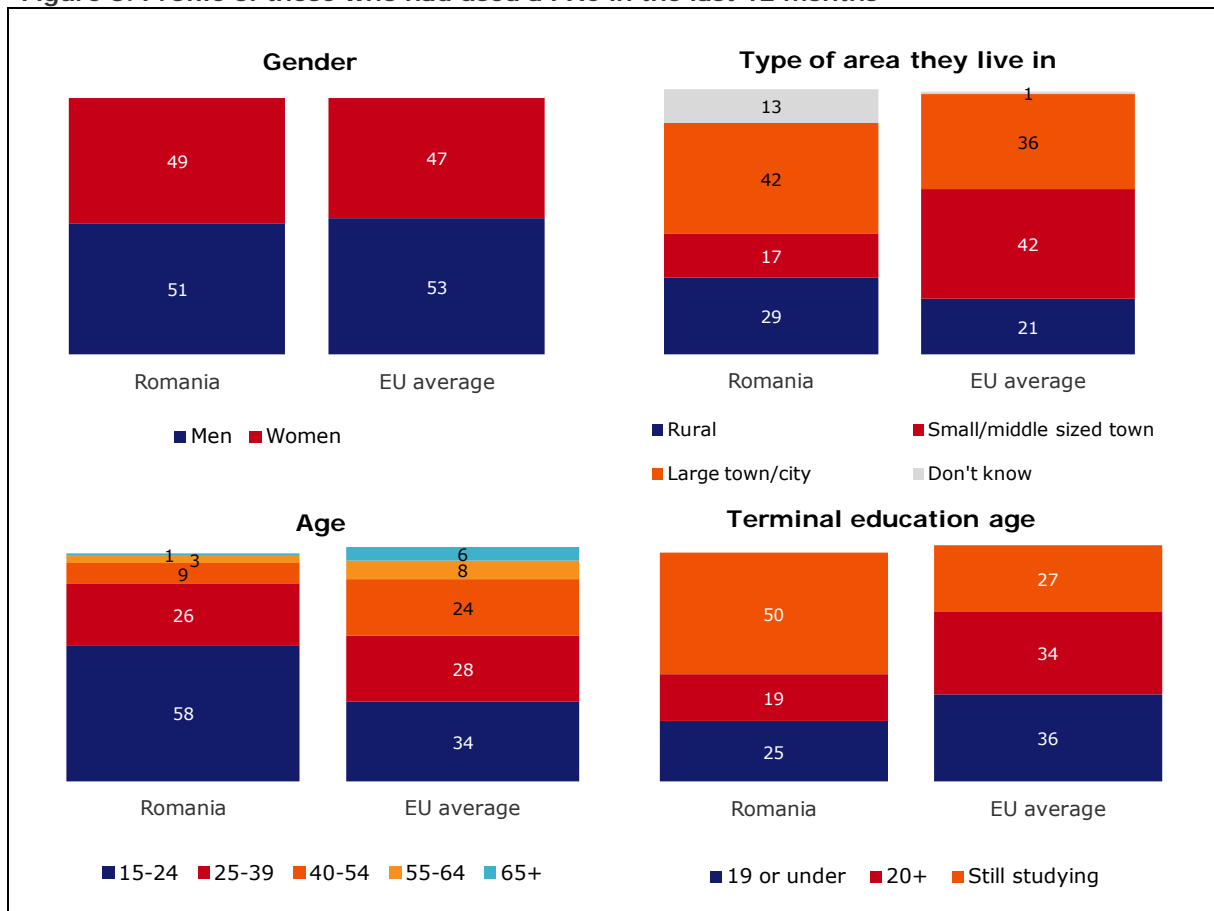
- 45% of library users in Romania were men and 55% women, broadly in line with the EU average (42% men, 58% women)
- Compared with the EU average, users in Romania were more much more likely to be found in the youngest 15-24 year old age group (42% compared with the EU average of 24%), and a little more likely to be aged 25-39 years (29% versus 26%). They were less likely than users across the EU to be aged 40-54 (19% versus 25%), 55-64 (5% versus 12%) and 65+ (4% versus 13%).

Around one fifth (18%) of those who had visited a library in Romania in the last 12 months had used a PAC, higher than the EU average of 14%. When those who had not used a PAC were asked why this was, although the majority (54%) said they had no need because they had a computer/internet at home, a significant minority of 5% 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 3% of adults in Romania had used PACs in the last 12 months, similar to the average of 4% of adults across the EU countries. This is estimated to be around 0.5 million adults in Romania.

PAC users in Romania were much more likely than the EU average to be aged 15-24 and to still be studying. They were also more likely to live in a rural area or large town/city 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: Romania (749), EU (11716).

A third (34%) of PAC users in Romania made use of PACs at least once a week, compared with 23% across the EU, with 29% doing so once to three times a month (compared with 29% across the EU). Around one in three (34%) had used PACs once every three months or less often, compared with the EU average of 47%.

In the qualitative research, library managers described a variety of means by which they had worked to increase ICT usage rates and meet the needs of users. Most libraries promoted their activities and services on Facebook, Twitter, the library blog, website and on outdoor posters. Some also used Google+, Flickr, and local TV and radio, and/or organized interesting courses and film showings to attract new users. Library managers from semi-rural areas believed that word-of-mouth worked efficiently in small communities, and that there was no need to invest effort into additional promotion channels.

“When talking about low income persons...we offer free services, it would be normal that they would be interested in the public library. We participate on local TV and radio stations and we are invited to promote our services. They could find out about this from

there. We also go to schools and kindergartens, and we have activities beyond the walls of the library.” (Senior Library Manager, Urban)

In order to attract new users, structured training sessions were tailored to the community’s needs. For instance, a library that had no initial success attracting adult users organized training sessions for children, hoping that through the children they would manage to engage parents as well. Likewise, in a library where the local emigration rate was high, librarians tried to get in contact with older people whose families lived abroad.

Urban libraries managed to target older people very well. “Buni-net” and “Sense” training sessions (structured digitalization courses aimed at older people) were some examples of programs designed especially to train older people, and urban libraries also attracted older users through partnerships with the City Hall, hospices and senior clubs. In semi-rural areas, however, older people were thought harder to reach and digitalization courses for older people were less popular.

People with disabilities were unanimously considered difficult to reach. The only way to reach them was considered to be through NGOs and Associations, but often people with disabilities were not open to ICT usage, and some libraries could not be accessed by people in wheelchairs. In cases where librarians had dedicated themselves to reaching users with disabilities, they tended to have been unsuccessful.

People on low incomes were seen as easy to reach, as they accessed the library without any need for special targeting.

Unemployed people and job seekers were generally easy to target, as they came to the library by themselves. For them, some of the libraries organized special structured training sessions lasting 3 days. Through the “How to find a working contract” project, users learned how to write a CV and a cover letter and to apply for jobs. In semi-rural areas, unemployed people seemed to be less enthusiastic about attending group trainings because people and especially women experienced feelings of shame, so that the librarian had to run individual sessions.

The Roma minority was generally thought easy to target, as they came by themselves. There were reports from library managers and users of Roma creating disturbance and discomfort for other users (e.g insisting on using the computers outside the permitted time interval, and used the computers only for entertainment and not for more serious issues like searching for a job or consulting paperwork), and they were welcomed in the library only if they wore clean clothes and did not make other users uncomfortable.

Hungarians and Germans were more difficult to reach targets, as they behaved like closed groups and preferred to visit their ethnic community library. Moreover, the current computers’ operating systems were generally installed in the Romanian language only, so minorities who did not know the language could not operate the computers.

“There are libraries that have a ramp and you can access the library, and there are libraries to where is impossible to get up the stairs for a person with motor disability.” (Senior Library Manager, Urban)

“We also have Roma people that are living in this area and come to the Internet hall. But, in general, they create problems and so we suspend their library permits for one month, because they don’t comply with the rules. We have one hour access, but they want to stay

longer, you can't talk, use the phone and you keep telling them that until you suspend their permit. After a month they come back." (Library Manager, Urban)

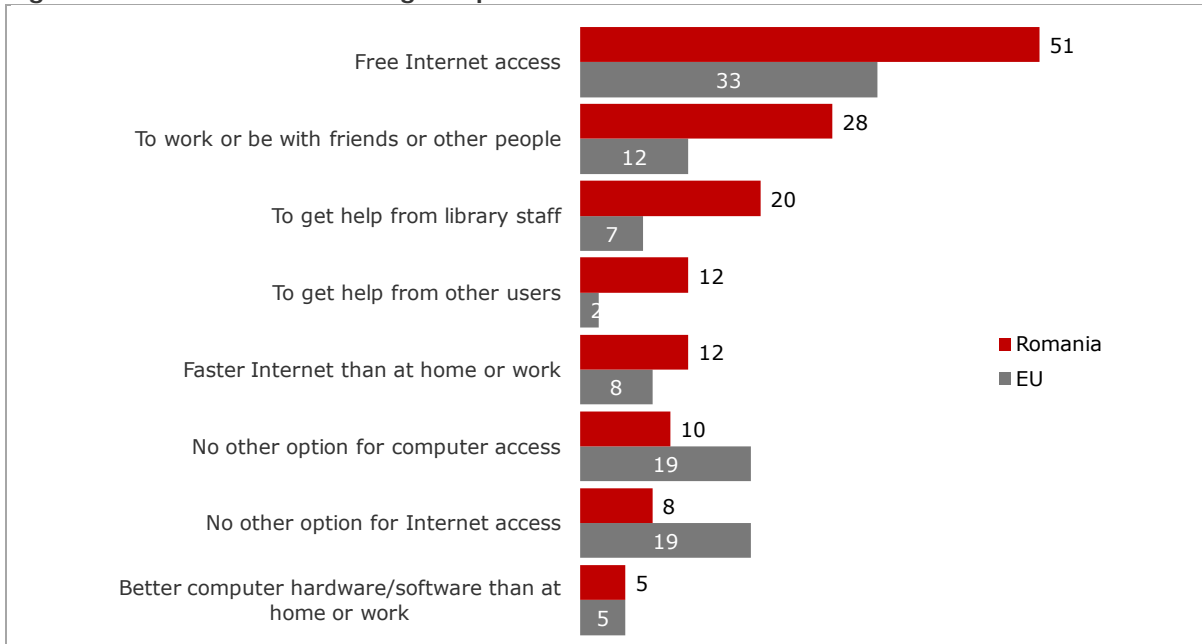
Users were asked for the reasons why they used library ICT services: key motivations included that the service was free, the environment was quiet and less disruptive than other locations, the internet connection worked well and they could also benefit from printing and scanning facilities. PACs also offered protection from viruses so that it was safe to download documents. Structured training provided by the library was a key factor that attracted older users and those new to digital skills in particular. The convenient location of the library and access to the library's other services such as books and reference materials was also important for some users.

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 across the EU, and even more so in Romania, the primary motivation for PAC users is the free nature of the service (51% Romania, compared with EU average of 33%). Users in Romania were also much more likely than users in the 17 EU countries as a whole to have mentioned working or being with friends or other people (28% versus 12% respectively) and getting help from library staff (20% versus 7%) as reasons for using PACs in libraries.

Despite the proportion of households with Internet access at home being much lower in Romania (47%) than the EU average (73%) - both figures from Eurostat data 2011 - PAC users in Romania were less likely than those at the overall EU level to have mentioned no other option for computer or Internet access as main reasons for using PACs in libraries.

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- Romania (749); EU (11716)

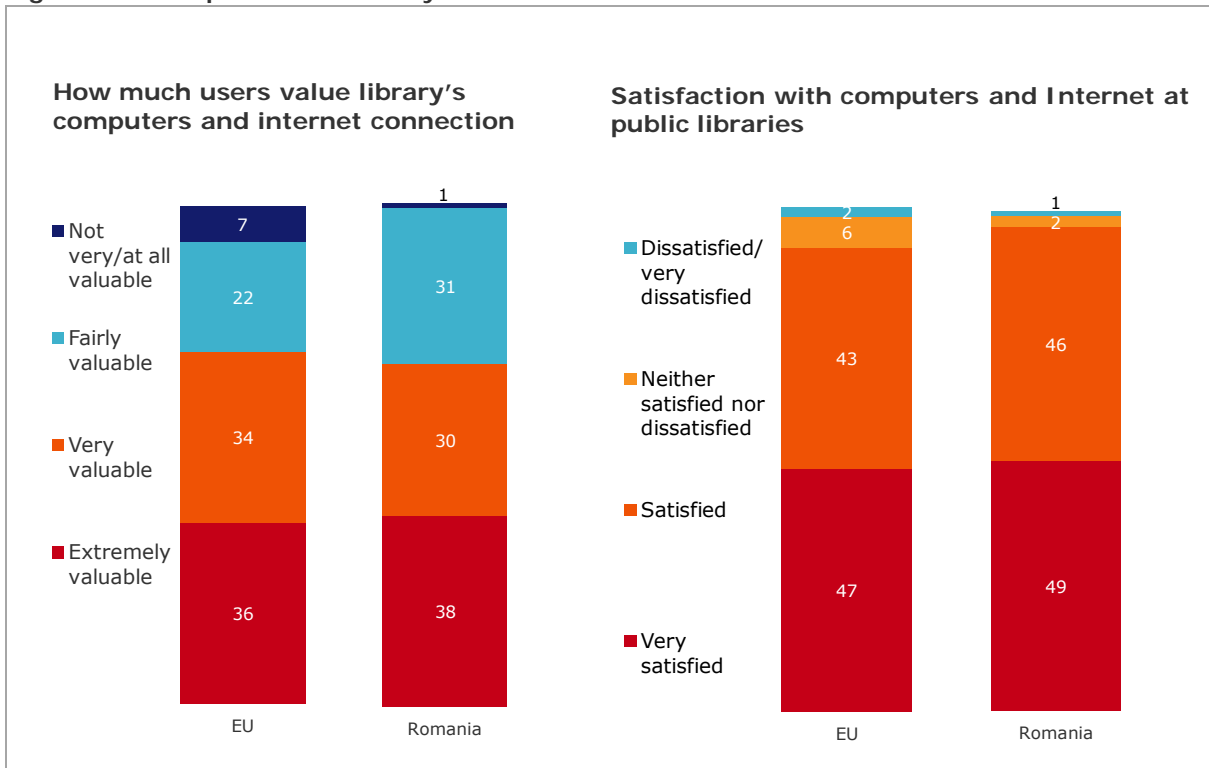
In addition to the questions on reasons for using computers in libraries reported above, PAC users were also asked two more direct questions as to what other options they had, firstly regarding where else they could access the internet from, and secondly, where else they could access the internet *‘for free’*. In Romania, 7% of PAC users said that they had no other options for accessing the internet (compared with 11% across the EU), and a further 14% that there was no other source of free internet for them (in line with 14% across the EU). Overall, it is estimated that 0.1 million PAC users in Romania (20% of PAC users) had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.

The value placed on the PAC service among users in Romania was broadly similar to the EU average, as shown in Figure 5. Overall, 99% of PAC users in Romania said that the library’s computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users. Around two fifths of PAC users in Romania (38%) said the service was extremely valuable, similar to the EU figure of 36%. A little under a third of PAC users (30%) rated the service as fairly valuable compared with a comparable figure of 34% for the EU average. Users in Romania were more likely to rate the PAC service as fairly valuable (31% versus EU average of 22%).

The library’s computers and internet connection were valued particularly highly in Romania by users who finished their education aged 19 or under where more than half (53%) rated the services as extremely valuable.

Satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users, as shown in Figure 5. Almost all PAC users in Romania (95%) said that they were satisfied. Around one in two users (49%) said that they were very satisfied, similar to the EU average (47%). Only a very small minority of users in Romania (1%) said that they were dissatisfied with access to the PACs service at libraries, compared with the EU average of 2%.

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. Romania (749); EU (11716)

In Romania, seven out of ten PAC users (70%) said that when they go to a library to use a computer they find a free computer straight away, broadly in line with the EU average (72%). Less than one in five users (18%) said that they have to wait up to 10 minutes, again broadly similar to the EU average (16%). Around one in twelve (8%) said that they have to wait at least 10 minutes for a computer to be available (compared with 7% at the overall EU level).

In the qualitative sample, libraries had between 4 and 10 computers, depending on the size of the population the library served. All PACs were equipped with headphones, a webcam, a scanner, a printer and one video-projector. Some urban libraries had other hardware obtained through other types of funding, such as digital voice recorders, tablets and audio synthesizers. The only problem that was highlighted by some libraries was a lack of funding for toner and paper.

Library managers reported that both hardware and software worked reliably and were sufficiently up-to-date for their purposes. The computers had broadband internet connection which permitted the users to download files and stream videos and music. The internet connection rarely failed (this was more likely in semi-rural areas): generally it was reliable and the speed was constant. Most libraries provided access to wi-fi; in urban libraries, the wi-fi was used by students or professionals who worked on their personal laptops; in rural areas, wi-fi was used less frequently.

Users were generally satisfied with the condition of hardware provided in libraries, and reported that it worked reliably and was sufficiently up-to-date for their needs. The internet connection was said to be very good and much better than in other locations. Minor inconveniences reported by users included

some headphone sets that were not working; and like the library managers, users complained about insufficient paper and toner available to print.

*"I have internet at home, but there's a problem with it, it works very slow. There are some sites that need to wait half an hour to open the page, so I prefer to come here."
(User, F, 25-39)*

4. Impressions of public libraries

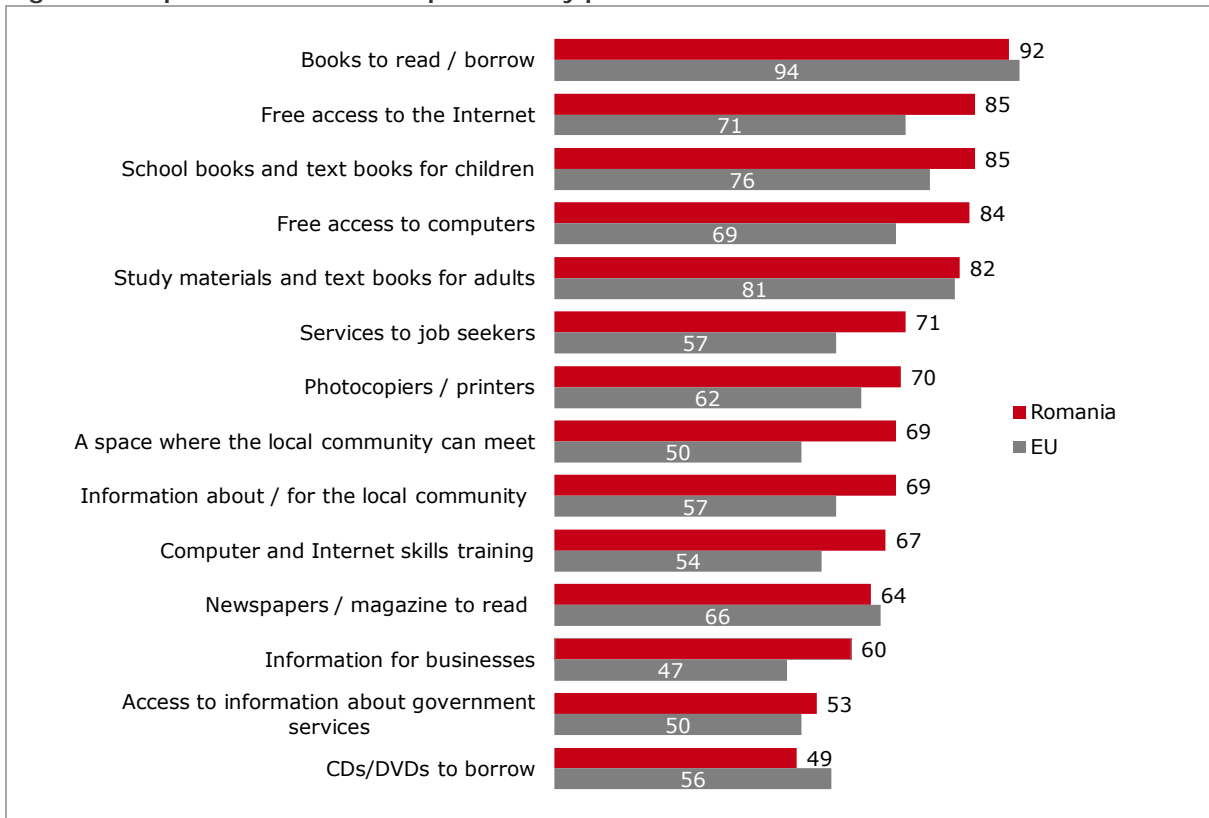
4.1 Importance of library services

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 Romania, and across the EU, rating each service as 4 or 5 on the scale.

For most of the services, users in Romania were somewhat more likely than users across the EU to rate services as 4 or 5 on the scale. The core service of 'books to read/borrow' was considered the most important, rated as important by 92% of users in Romania (and 94% across the EU).

'Free access to the internet' and 'free access to computers' were both rated among the most important services by library users in Romania, more than eight in ten considering each important, compared with the equivalent figure of around seven out of ten users across Europe. 'School books and text books for children' (85%) and 'study materials and text books for adults' (82%) were also considered important by the large majority of users in Romania. Two thirds of users in Romania (67%) rated the provision of computer and Internet skills training as an important service, compared with the 54% EU average.

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 - Romania (1496); EU (24253)

In the qualitative research, users described the library environment positively, using words such as quiet, pleasant, communicative, friendly, and warm. Most users had established a good relationship with the library staff whom they perceived as “teachers” or even family figures.

4.2 Effectiveness and funding of public libraries

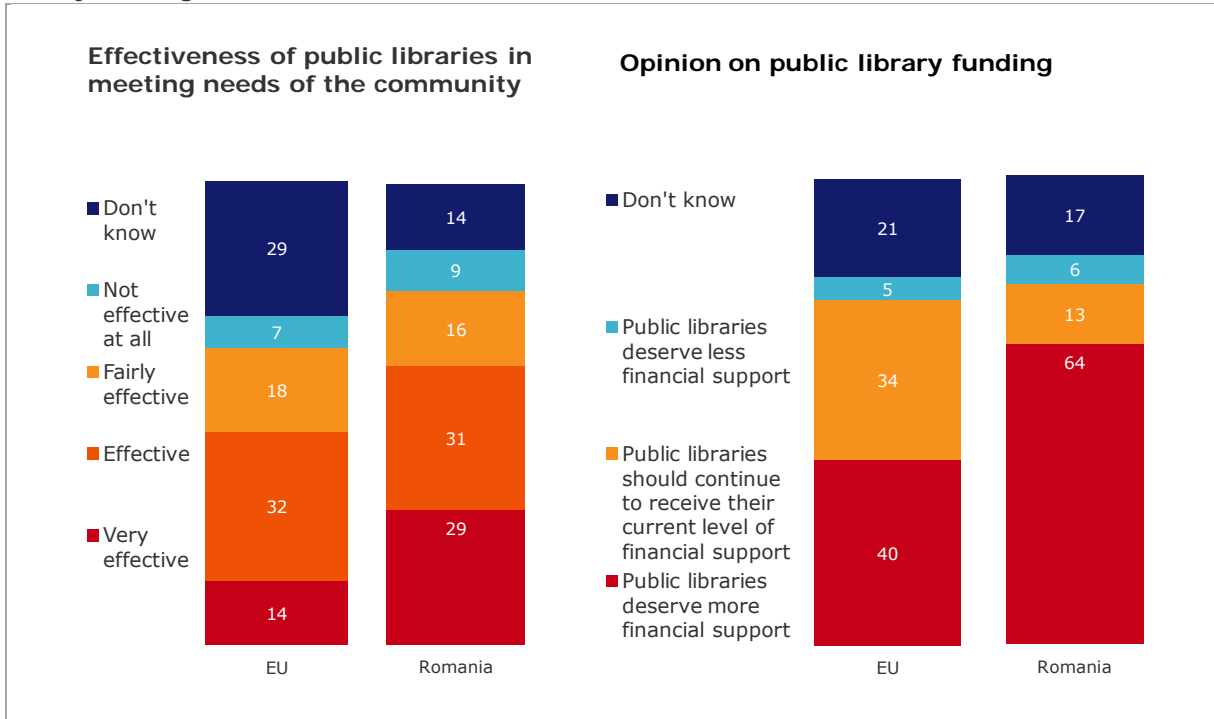
More than three quarters (77%) of the general public in Romania (including both library users and non-users) felt libraries were either very effective, effective or fairly effective at meeting the needs of their local community. This was higher than the average across the 17 EU survey countries of 64%.

Library users were almost unanimous and PAC users were unanimous in their opinion that libraries were effective in meeting the needs of their local community – 95% of all library users in Romania felt they were effective, rising to 100% among PAC users.

Just under two thirds (64%) of the public in Romania felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, significantly higher than the average of all 17 EU countries (40%). Around one in eight (13%) felt that funding should continue as at present, considerably lower than the EU average of 34%. One in six (17%) were unable to express an opinion, a little lower than the EU average of 21%. Only 6% of the public in Romania felt that public libraries deserve *less* financial support, in line with the EU average (5%).

Not surprisingly, library users and PAC users were much more likely than non-users to say that libraries deserve more financial support – 84% of all library users and 88% 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



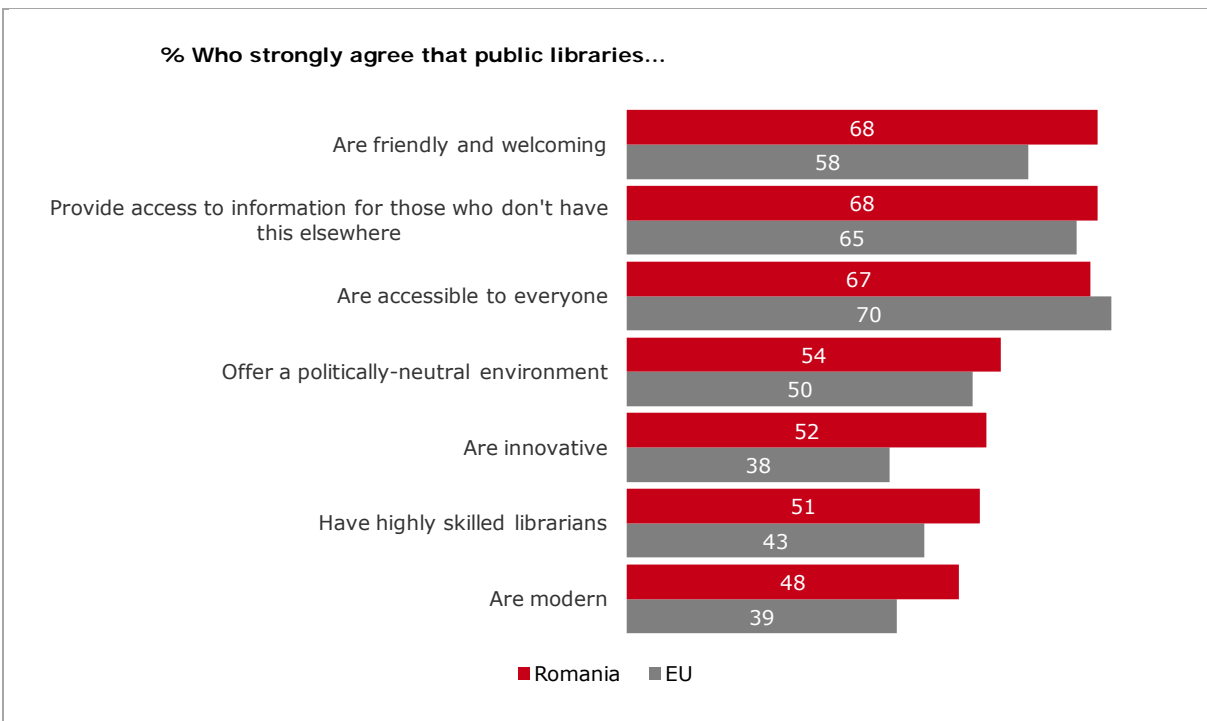
Source: Omnibus survey- Q6 How effective do you think your local public library is at meeting the needs of your community? & Q7 Which of the following statements represents most closely your opinion regarding the current funding for public libraries?

Base: All adults - Romania (1117); 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 Romania and EU who strongly agreed with each of these statements. Library users in Romania, compared with users across the EU, were more likely to strongly agree that public libraries 'Are friendly and welcoming' (68% compared with 58% across the EU). A similar proportion of users in Romania (around two thirds) strongly agreed that public libraries are 'Accessible to everyone' and that they 'Provide access to information for those who don't have it elsewhere', broadly in line with the EU averages for these statements. Users in Romania were more likely than the EU average to strongly agree that public libraries 'Are innovative' (52% versus 38%), 'Are modern' (48% versus 39%) and 'Have highly skilled librarians' (51% versus 43%).

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. Romania (1496); 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.

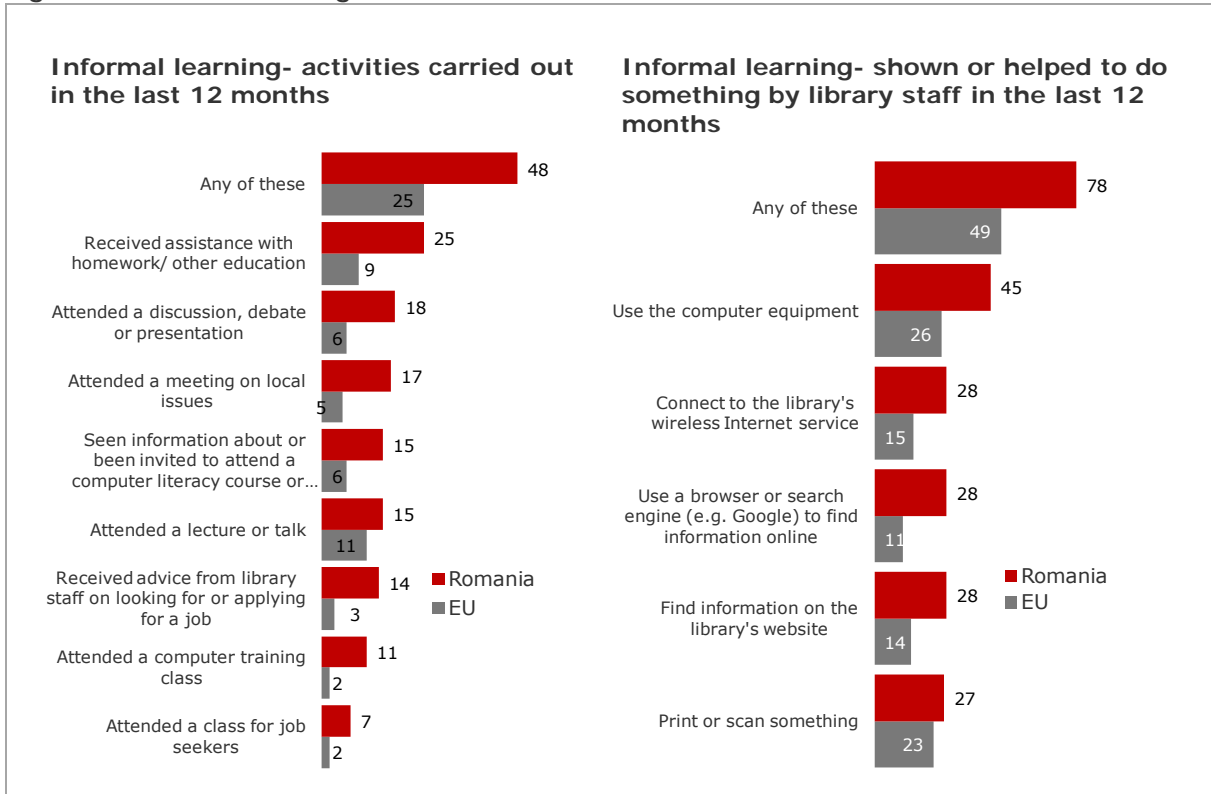
Overall, in Romania just under a half of all users (48%) had taken part in one of the educational activities in libraries asked about in the last 12 months, an exceptionally high proportion compared with the EU average of 25%. This reflects the younger age profile of library users in Romania relative to the EU average, and also implies that Romanian libraries are particularly focused on training.

Engagement levels in all educational activities in libraries were higher in Romania than for the EU as a whole (Figure 9), particularly so for:

- Receiving assistance with homework/other education (25% vs. EU average of 9%)
- Attending a discussion, debate or presentation (18% vs. EU average of 6%)
- Attending a meeting on local issues (17% vs. EU average of 5%)
- Seeing information about or being invited to attend a computer literacy course (15% vs. EU average of 6%).
- Receiving advice from library staff on looking for/applying for a job (14% vs. EU average of 3%)
- Attending a computer training class (11% vs. EU average of 2%)

In terms of computer training, c.330,000 adults in Romania 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 - Romania (1496); EU (24253). C17- All PAC users – Romania (749); EU (11716).

As Figure 9 shows, public library staff play a key role in assisting library users in informal learning. Overall, more than three quarters (78%) of library users in Romania had been shown or helped to do something by a member of library staff within the last 12 months, which was significantly higher than the EU average of 49%.

The most common way in which library staff assisted library users in Romania was with using the computer equipment. This was followed by help with connection to the library's wireless Internet service, help using a browser/search engine to find information and help finding information on the library's website where, for each, nearly three in ten users said that library staff assisted them with these tasks.

In the qualitative research, users were very positive about the support they received from library staff in using PACs. Staff were said to be available at all times to answer queries or help users get to the outcomes they wanted. They offered advice in a variety of areas, such as simple navigation, creating accounts on e-mail, Facebook or Skype, viewing bills online, using the webcam, the keyboard and the mouse, writing CDs and DVDs, browsing job portals or legislation websites and helping the users produce their own CVs and cover letters. Advice was highly appreciated, especially by inexperienced users who reported that the staff were able to clearly explain things to them and were very patient, explaining

things repeatedly if necessary. First-time users thought that without help from staff they would not have been able to overcome the difficulties they had when first accessing ICT.

Most of the libraries offered structured training sessions in subjects that included: initiation in digital skills, internet navigation, creating and using an e-mail account, blog writing, employment courses and Microsoft Office. Courses were structured according to the needs of the user group, so that for instance if the group contained older users, it might go at a slower pace.

"Usually, the colleagues make groups of 3-4. They also had bigger groups, but they prefer to work with smaller groups because they can go to each one of them to put the mouse in their hand and to explain everything. The explanations are very simple, there is nothing written, nothing dictated, nothing that can't be understood by them and usually the course lasts for one month." (Library Manager, Urban)

Users who had participated in training were generally older people who had learnt about basic digital skills, and they found the courses to be very practical, logical, coherent and very useful. They felt the course had been suited to their needs, and appreciated the way in which information was taught to them, for example not being required to record much information in writing.

"The explanations given to us are so well explained, that it's practically impossible not to assimilate them. I refer to the teaching style and talent." (User, M, 65+)

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.

Around two fifths (39%) of PAC users in Romania had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, higher than the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 0.2 million PAC users in Romania who had used PAC for employment related activity.

Overall, 5% of PAC users in Romania had used a PAC to apply for a job (either in Romania or in another EU country) in the last 12 months - this represents approximately 28,000 adults in Romania. Of those respondents who applied for a job through PAC, 33% said that they were successful. This means that in all 2% of PAC users in Romania – or an estimated 9,000 adults– applied for and got a job via a PAC in the last 12 months.

Public library staff have an important role to play in supporting employment related PAC activities, as is shown in Figure 10; a third (34%) of PAC users in Romania indicated that they had been shown or helped to do some employment-related PAC activity (much higher than the EU average of 11%). The most common way in which library staff assisted library users in Romania was in helping them to improve the skills needed in their current job (14% compared with an EU average of 4%), followed by helping them to write a CV (13% compared with an EU average of 5%)

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		
	%		%		
		Romania		Romania	EU
Any listed below		39		34	11
Find information about searching and/or applying for jobs	15	14	Improve skills needed in your current job	14	4
Search for jobs	11	13	How to write a CV	13	5
Write a CV or covering letter	12	12	How to develop skills needed to obtain a job	9	2
Improve skills needed in your current job	16	11	How to look for a job online (such as finding a recruitment company, searching for information about an employer)	8	3
Apply for jobs in this country	5	10	How to apply for a job online	5	2
Search for information about an employer	5	8	How to look for and apply for jobs in other EU countries	3	1
Find a recruitment company	8	5			
Use spread sheet/data	2	3			
Search for jobs in other EU countries	3	2			
Apply for jobs in other EU countries	2	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. Romania (749); 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 nine PAC users had used a PAC for participating in professional networks (11% compared with the EU average of 6%). Around one in twelve (8%) had used a PAC for finding information related to a business they worked in, below the EU average of 20%.

The qualitative research found that libraries' activities relating to support for business included help with writing a blog for users to publicise their business, allowing workers to carry out business tasks online, and help with finding information on social entrepreneurship funding schemes and engaging with such schemes.

"In 2011 some agronomic engineers were sent by APIA (Agency for Payments and Interventions in Agriculture) to guide the farmers on computers. It was a big success." (Senior Library Manager, Urban)

"I am an AVON representative and I come here to place my orders. Before, I used to place the order by phone, but now it's easier for me." (User, F, 40-64)

Libraries also provided support for unemployed users to job-search, including help with writing a CV and a cover letter, and giving advice on how to apply for jobs. These activities were covered within structured training, as well as within informal support. Some of the librarians gave this area special attention by presenting the information in a 3 day course; others simply offered support whenever a user required it. Translating CVs into different languages and counseling for future job interviews were some additional examples of support offered by librarians where they felt they had the competency to provide such help.

7. E-government and active citizenship

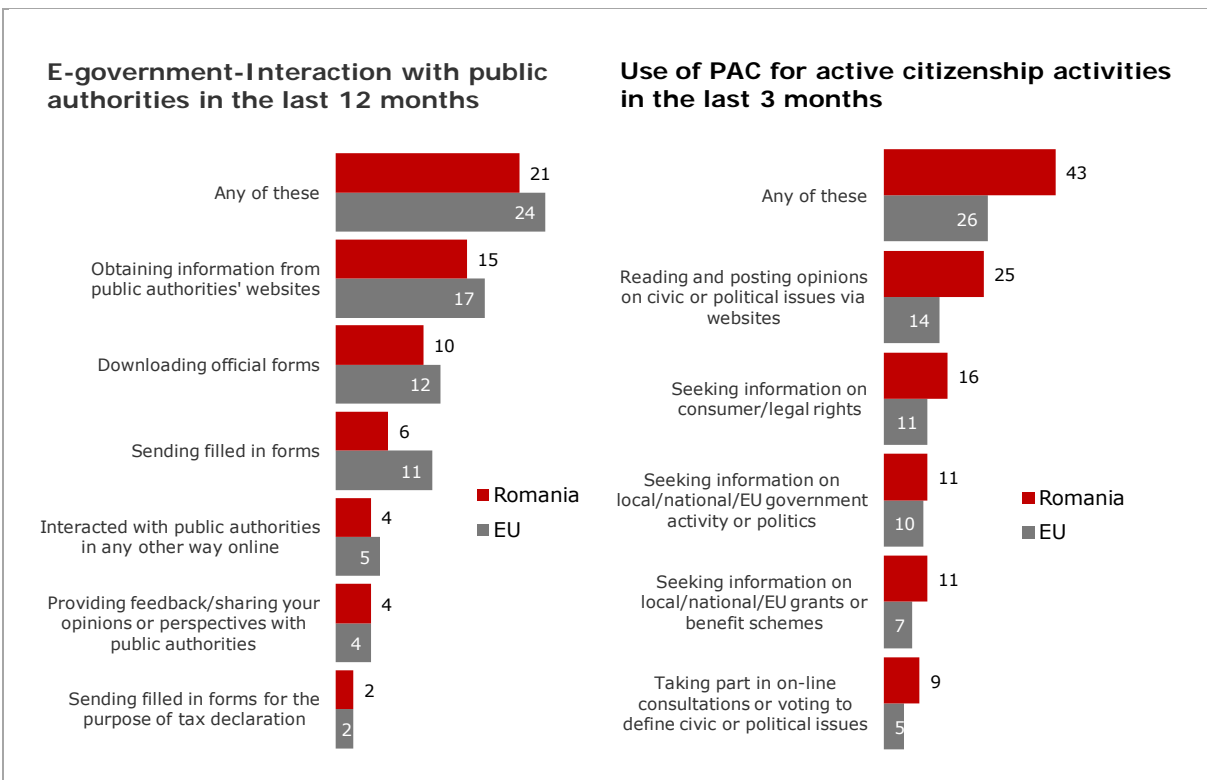
As part of the 'Connecting Europe' agenda, public libraries represent a network of public digital access points which can assist in the effective delivery of access to e-government. Computer users were asked about their interaction with public authorities using PACs, including obtaining information from 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 Romania is much lower than the EU average. Only 7% of adults in Romania had used the internet in the last 12 months to interact with public authorities, compared with 41% across the EU. Citizens in Romania were also much less likely than the EU average to use the Internet to obtain information from public authorities' websites (7% compared with 35%).

The library survey found that around one in five PAC users in Romania (21%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, slightly lower than the EU average (24%), but significantly higher than the Eurostat finding for all adults in Romania. The most common ways in which PAC users in Romania interacted with public authorities were to obtain information from public authorities' websites and download official forms (10%). In each case, these figures were broadly in line with the proportions across the 17 EU countries as a whole, but much higher than the Eurostat findings for all adults in Romania.

Computer 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, 43% of PAC users in Romania had used PAC for engagement activities in the past 3 months, much higher than the average for users across the EU (26%). The two most common community engagement activities mentioned by users in Romania were reading and posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (25% Romania compared with 14% EU) and seeking information on consumer/legal rights (16% Romania compared with 11% 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. Romania (749); EU (11716)

In the qualitative research, some libraries had developed training on financial education that was ready to be launched. "Bani IQ" was one example, which was intended to educate users in basic fiscal and economic matters. Further, libraries had offered support to farmers on how to complete the APIA (The Agency for Payments and Intervention for Agriculture) forms, how to find information on EU non-returnable funding, and advice on where to find actualized Romanian and EU legislation.

In the area of civic participation, libraries encouraged users to participate in events in the areas of ecology, promoting local touristic destinations, volunteering for older people's hospices, and organizing cultural and social events such as festivals and summer-schools.

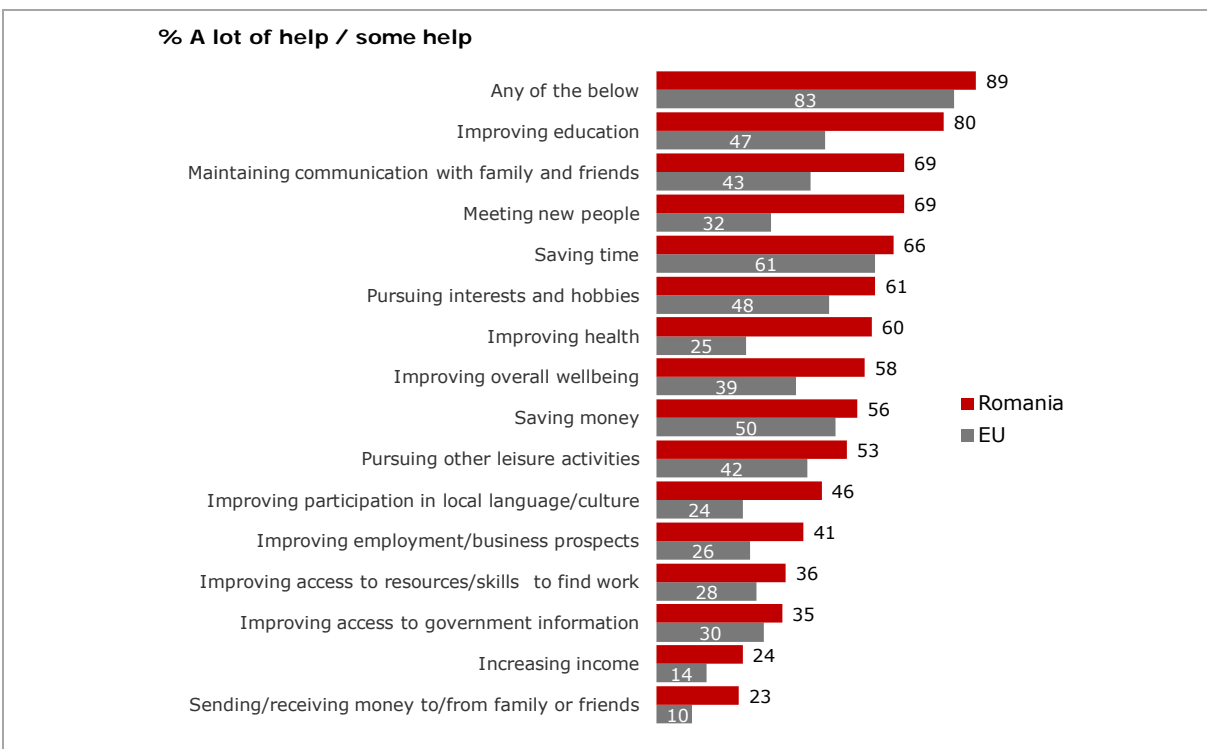
8. Impacts

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 nine in ten PAC users in Romania (89%) said that their PAC use had been helpful to them in at least one of the areas asked about, higher than the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 0.5 million people in Romania.

Figure 12 shows the proportions who said PAC use had been helpful in each area, within Romania 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- Romania (749); EU (11716).

PAC users in Romania were more likely than users across the EU to have found PAC helpful for all the areas asked about. They were most likely to mention that PAC use was helpful in improving education (80%), much higher than the EU average of 47%, reflecting the relatively young age profile of PAC users in Romania. Following this, the most common ways in which users found computers in public libraries helpful were maintaining communication with family and friends (69% compared with the EU average of 43%), meeting new people (69% versus 32%) and saving time (66% versus 61%). More than half (56%) of PAC users in Romania, compared with half (50%) across the EU, said PAC was helpful in saving money, which represents an estimated 300,000 PAC users in Romania.

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

- 420,000 people to improve their education
- 210,000 people to improve their employment or business prospects
- 190,000 people to improve their access to resources necessary to find work
- 130,000 people to increase their income
- 180,000 people to improve their access to government information services

The qualitative research found that ICT usage in libraries had a variety of positive impacts on users. Older people were particularly likely to feel the benefit of developing basic digital skills as it allowed them to carry out tasks online that they would otherwise not have been able to do, such as communicate with

loved ones and search for health information online. Users of all ages had been able to develop their talents, hobbies and lifelong interests by learning to find relevant information online. As discussed above, job seekers had learnt how to write a CV and apply for jobs online.

Some examples of the benefits felt by users as reported by library staff included: a mother who learnt to use Skype to hear and see her daughter living in Turkey because she could not afford to call on the phone; a Roma teenager who was mentored and helped with homework by the librarian and so managed to fulfill his childhood dream of becoming an ambulance nurse; and a homeless man who learnt to manage his own photo blog where he posted pictures he took in his community.

"We have a person that has some problems, he doesn't have a job ...He comes to us every day. He makes photos and come to us to download them. [...] He has a blog where uploads photos from the community. Because at home he doesn't have anything, no heating, no water, the library is the only place where he can have Internet access – otherwise he wouldn't have this." (Library Manager, Urban)

"Many of the young people that grew up in institutionalized houses found a job, but I can't say they are socially integrated. The ICT helped them to find a job because they connected to other people, submitted their CV... One of them found a job abroad. He left, got a job there and then others went there, too." (Senior Library Manager, Urban)

Although most users felt that PACs had not changed their lives or the lives of people they knew dramatically, certain areas of their lives had been improved, such as their professional life, social life, ability to access information quickly and so develop interests. Users also reported improved self-confidence as a result of having learnt new skills.

"Friends that I haven't seen in years, they are on Facebook which helps me a lot, with the pictures, yes... With the help of the computer, otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to see them... I can also send a CV [...] I say that the computer is the easiest thing. For example, you buy something for your household; you don't have to go into the city... You look over the internet; place an order, the majority of people do this now. On the internet, one finds faster..." (Recent first time user, M, 25-39)

"It hasn't totally changed our lives, but in some fields it changed. If I want to read a newspaper, for example... Or if at 10 o'clock in the evening a question pops up in my mind, I immediately open the computer and get informed." (User, M, 65+)