

# Users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries in the Czech Republic

Final report

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Susannah Quick, Gillian Prior, Ben Toombs, Luke Taylor and Rosanna Currenti



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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 the Czech Republic and compares the results to the EU total.

### The public library landscape

- The desk research estimates that there are 5,408 public libraries in the Czech Republic, which equates to 5.1 libraries per 10,000 population, significantly higher than the average of 1.3 libraries per 10,000 population across the EU.
- Computer access is currently available in almost all public libraries in the Czech Republic.

### Library and PAC usage

- An estimated 1.9 million adults in the Czech Republic, around one in five adults in the country (21%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 0.3 million adults in the Czech Republic, 4% of adults, had used PACs in the last 12 months, in line with the average of 4% of adults across the EU.
- PAC users in the Czech Republic were more likely than the EU average to be women and to have left full time education aged 19 or under. They were also more likely to live in a city or large town.
- The primary motivations of PAC users across the EU are the free nature of the service together with the lack of other options that people have. PAC users in the Czech Republic, compared with users across the EU, were more likely to have mentioned getting help from library staff, and getting help from other users, as reasons for using computers in public libraries.
- Overall, it is estimated that 90,000 PAC users in the Czech Republic had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.
- The value placed on the PAC service was slightly lower among users in the Czech Republic than the EU average. Overall, 90% of PAC users in the Czech Republic said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users. However, 27% of PAC users in the Czech Republic said the service was extremely valuable, significantly lower than the EU average (36%).
- Satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users: 92% of users in the Czech Republic were satisfied.

## Perceptions and impacts of public libraries

- Users in the Czech Republic were much less likely than the EU average to rate 'Free access to the internet' and 'free access to computers' as important library services, around four in ten considering each important, compared with the equivalent figure of around seven in ten users across Europe.
- Around two thirds (67%) of the general public in the Czech Republic (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 slightly higher than the average across the EU of 64%.
- Just over a third (36%) of the public in the Czech Republic felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, slightly lower than the EU average (40%).
- Overall 95% of PAC users in the Czech Republic said their PAC use had delivered at least one impact for them, higher than the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 280,000 people in the Czech Republic.
- Library users in the Czech Republic were more likely than the EU average to strongly agree that public libraries 'Are friendly and welcoming' (65% CZ compared with 58% EU), 'Have highly skilled librarians' (50% CZ compared with 43% EU), and that they 'Offer a politically-neutral environment' (56% CZ, 50% EU).

## Informal and non-formal learning

- In the Czech Republic 34% 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

- Just over a third (35%) of PAC users in the Czech Republic had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, slightly below the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 100,000 PAC users in the Czech Republic who had used PAC for employment related activity.
- An estimated 18,500 PAC users in the Czech Republic had used a PAC to apply for a job in the last 12 months, and an estimated 6,000 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 the Czech Republic (23%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, in line with the EU average (24%). The most common ways in which PAC users in the Czech Republic interacted with public authorities were to obtain information from public authorities' websites (17%), downloading official forms (9%), and sending filled in forms (9%).
- Overall, one in four PAC users in the Czech Republic (25%) had used PAC for civic engagement activities in the past 3 months, in line with the average for users across the EU (26%). The two most common community engagement activities were seeking information on consumer/legal rights (13% CZ compared with 11% EU) and reading and posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (11% CZ compared with 14% 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<sup>1</sup>. 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,<sup>2</sup> but in 2011, just 41% of the EU population used government services electronically.<sup>3</sup> 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)<sup>4</sup>.

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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<sup>1</sup> 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](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Eurostat](#), 2010

<sup>3</sup> [Eurostat](#), 2011

<sup>4</sup> Sciadras, 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 986 members of the public aged 15+ in the Czech Republic (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 the Czech Republic, 705 interviews were conducted with people who had not used Public Access Computers (PACs) in libraries (12,537 across the 17 countries) and 697 with those who had (11,716 across the 17 countries). The interviews in the Czech Republic were conducted in 50 libraries which were selected and contacted with help from a representative of Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic (SKIP). 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 the Czech Republic 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<sup>5</sup>.

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

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<sup>5</sup> 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)

## 2. The public library landscape and internet provision

There were 5,408 public libraries in the Czech Republic in 2011<sup>6</sup>, which equates to 5.1 public libraries per 10,000 population, significantly higher than the average across the 17 EU countries of 1.3 libraries per 10,000.

These 5,408 libraries were categorized as:

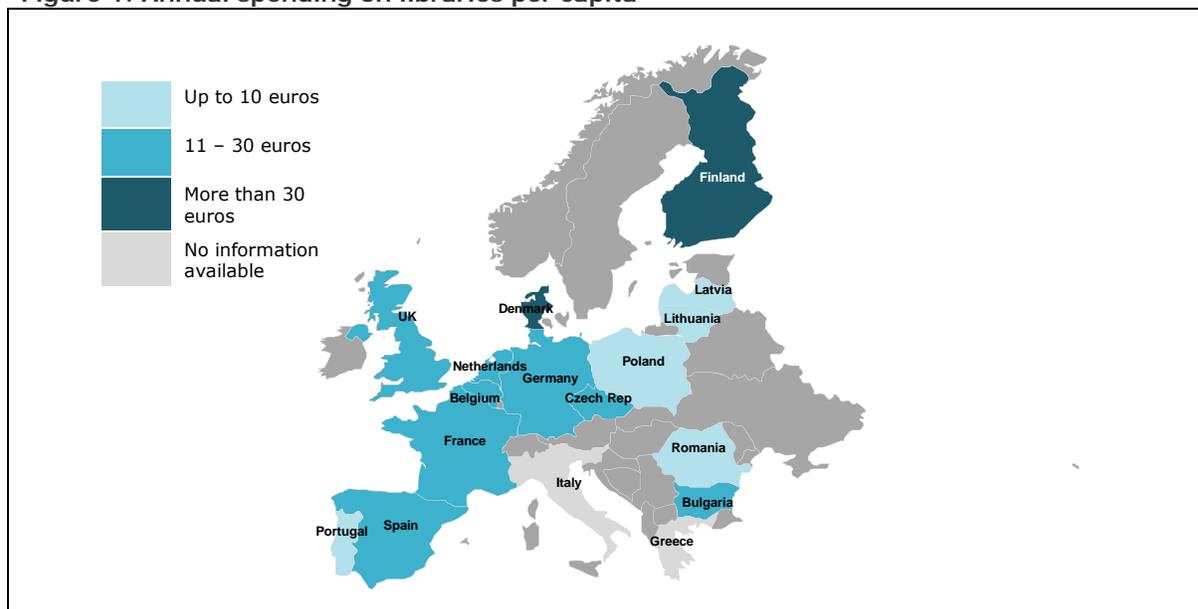
- 4,613 basic libraries with non-professional employees
- 693 basic libraries with professional employees
- 84 basic libraries, authorised to perform regional functions
- 13 regional libraries
- 1 Moravian Library in Brno
- 1 National Library of the Czech Republic and
- 3 other libraries registered under the Library Act No. 257/2001 Coll.

The number of public libraries had gradually decreased up until 2010 but has since stabilised.

Public libraries are administered by the relevant regional government or municipal body with the Moravian and National Libraries controlled by the Ministry of Culture. The centre of the library system is the National Library of the Czech Republic. Geographically, the centre of the Czech Republic and south west regions have the greatest number of public libraries whilst regions in the eastern part of the Czech Republic have the fewest.

Public libraries are financed almost exclusively by public money, with the majority of this provided by local government budgets (61%) and the remainder (39%) from state budget investment. Public spending on libraries per person in the Czech Republic is about 15 Euros (390 CZK.), as shown in the following map:

**Figure 1: Annual spending on libraries per capita**



Source: TNS desk research

In addition to the libraries traditional cultural and educational roles, there is also an emphasis on information services, including those targeting the business community. Recent improvements in the

<sup>6</sup> Source: The National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture (NIPOS)

number of computers per library user and number of computers connected to the Internet have considerably improved library information services. Basic library services (e.g. book/periodical lending, verbal information, Internet access, providing information from public sources) are all free of charge. Libraries can, however, charge fees for additional services.

According to the official library statistics provided by the Librarianship Institute of the National Library of the Czech Republic, 91% of public libraries offer free access to the internet to library users. 'Almost all' libraries have computer access.

Eurostat data (2011) on Internet access at home shows that the Czech Republic has a level slightly below Europe overall, with 67% of households having access to the Internet, compared with an EU average of 73%.

### **3. Library and PAC usage**

#### **3.1 Access to libraries and PACs**

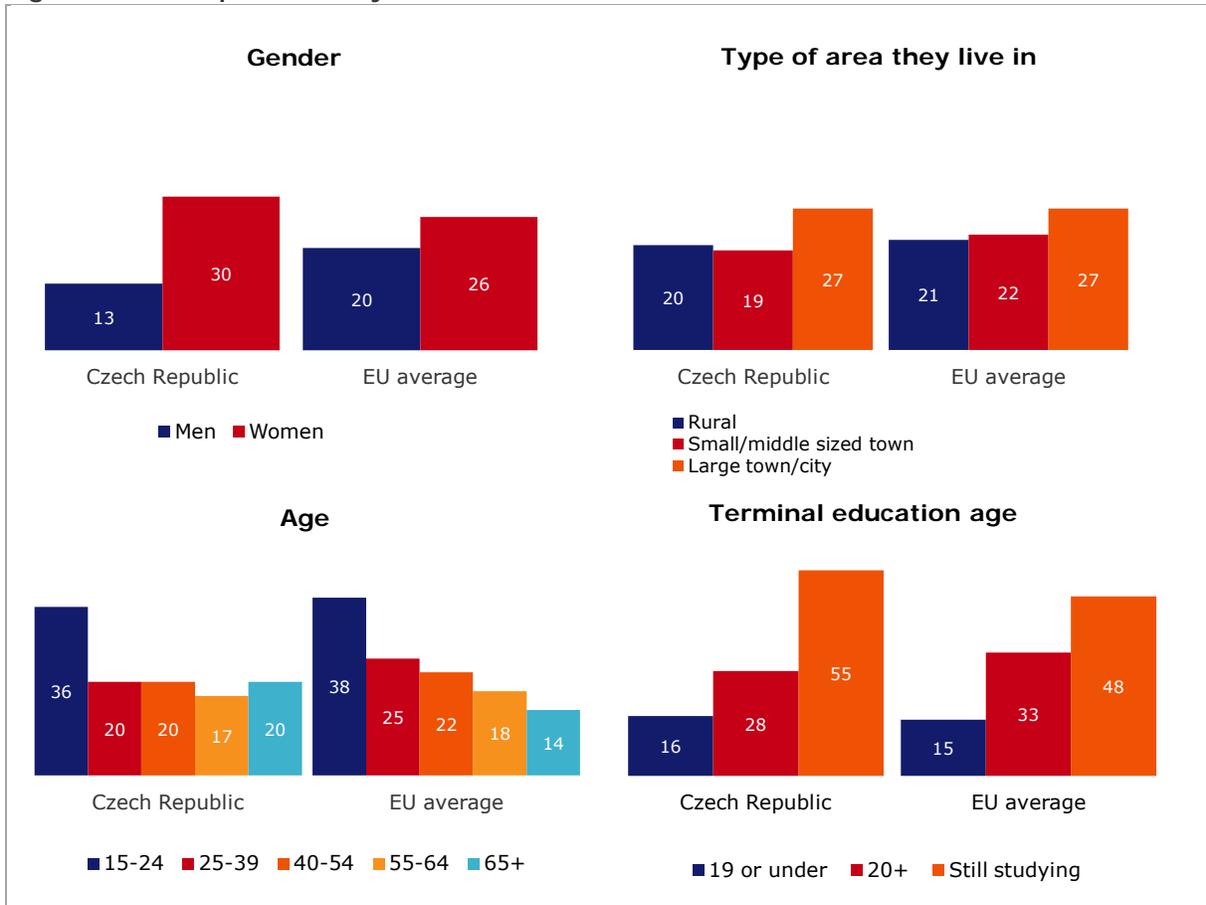
The general public survey found that library usage in the Czech Republic was broadly similar to the EU average.

- An estimated 1.9 million adults in the Czech Republic, around one in five adults in the country (21%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 1.4 million adults, around one in six adults in the Czech Republic (16%), had used a library at least once a month, slightly higher than the EU average of 14%.

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

- Women (30%) were more than twice as likely as men (13%) to have visited a library. Compared with the EU average across the 17 countries, men were much less likely to have done so.
- Library usage was highest among those aged 15-24 (36%), with usage ranging from 17% to 20% in each of the other age groups. Relative to the EU average, users in Romania were slightly less likely to be aged 25-29 (20% versus 25%) and more likely to be aged 65+ (20% versus 14%).
- 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 or cities (27%) than in either smaller towns (19%) or rural areas (20%) – a similar pattern to that found at the overall 17 country EU level.

**Figure 2: 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: CZ – All adults (986), Men (479), Women (507), 15-24 (135), 25-39 (276), 40-54 (243) 55-64 (213), 65+ (119), Large town/city (295), Small town (464), Rural area (225), Finished education 19 or under (644), 20 or over (221), Still studying (89). 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 the Czech Republic, compared with across the EU, was:

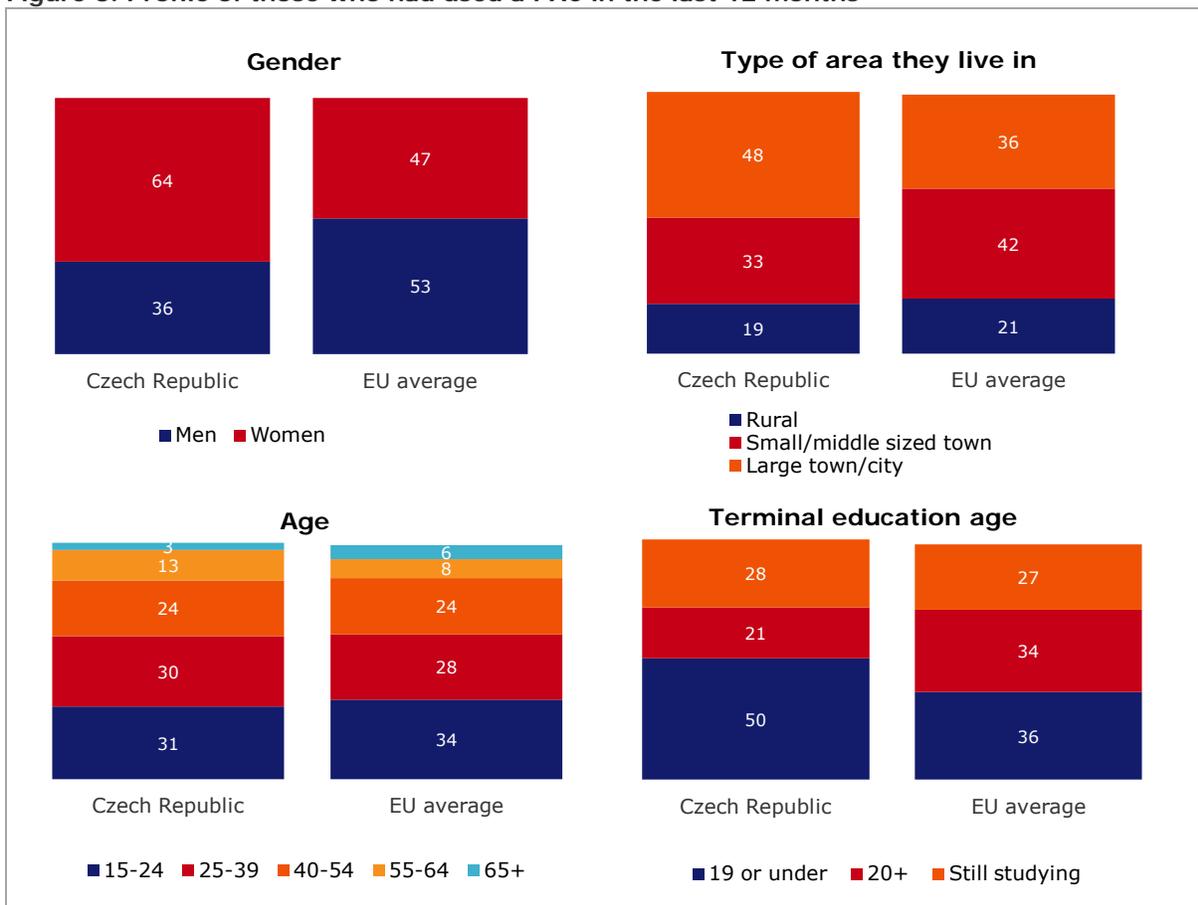
- Library users in the Czech Republic (28% men, 72% women) were much more likely to be women compared with the EU average (42% men, 58% women)
- Users in the Czech Republic had a slightly older age profile than the EU average – 21% were aged 15-24, 26% aged 25-39, 23% aged 40-54, 18% aged 55-64 and 12% 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+.

Around one in six (16%) of those who had visited a library in the Czech Republic in the last 12 months had used a PAC, slightly higher than the EU average of 14%. When those who had not used a PAC were asked why this was, the majority (69%) said they had no need to because they had a computer/internet at home, and a further one in five (18%) that they had no need to use a computer or the internet. 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 4% of adults in the Czech Republic had used PACs in the last 12 months, in line with the average of across the EU countries (also 4%). This is estimated to be around 0.3 million adults in the Czech Republic.

PAC users in the Czech Republic were much more likely than the EU average to be women and to have left full-time education aged 19 or under. They were also more likely to live in a large town or 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: CZ (697), EU (11716).

One in ten PAC users in the Czech Republic (10%) made use of PACs at least once a week, compared with 23% across the EU, with 38% doing so once to three times a month (compared with 29% across the EU). Around half (52%) had used PACs once every three months or less often, slightly higher than the EU average of 47%.

In the qualitative research, the library managers described a variety of means by which they were working to increase the usage rates of ICT in their libraries and meet the needs of users. Libraries advertised the possibility to access public computers and WiFi in all of their promotional materials, such as library websites, posters and local media. Newly-registered library members were given an induction, during which they were acquainted with the ICT services provided by the library. Libraries also worked in partnership with other local bodies including schools, employment offices and seniors' clubs, through which they encourage specific groups in the community to use the ICT in the library.

Libraries also employed various measures to attract hard-to-reach groups such as older people, the unemployed and ethnic minorities. To appeal to older users, libraries provided special ICT courses for

seniors to help them overcome fears of using ICT. One library invited not only older people to the course but also their grandchildren or previous participants, so that the older users felt more comfortable on the course. Other libraries organised homogenous groups of users such as the unemployed, and felt this encouraged people to participate

*“According to our experience, when we get a homogeneous group such as seniors or unemployed people into the course, they can easily overcome their fear, because they do not feel weird within the group. We also gather people with disabilities for ICT courses, because we put together a special course just for them.” (Senior Library Manager, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

To encourage unemployed people to use library ICT, one library had worked with the local employment office which recruited unemployed participants for library-run ICT training courses. However this had not continued due to a lack of funding. It was reported to be difficult for libraries to encourage Roma children to use ICT for anything other than entertainment, although one library’s project that involved working with schools to encourage children to use computers for learning had included Roma children.

*“Our librarians and teachers in the local school together prepare special classes for children. To do the homework, the kids need to find some information in books, but also from on the internet. For this, they are sent to the library to use our computers and materials. Roma kids are also included in this project.” (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Czech Republic)*

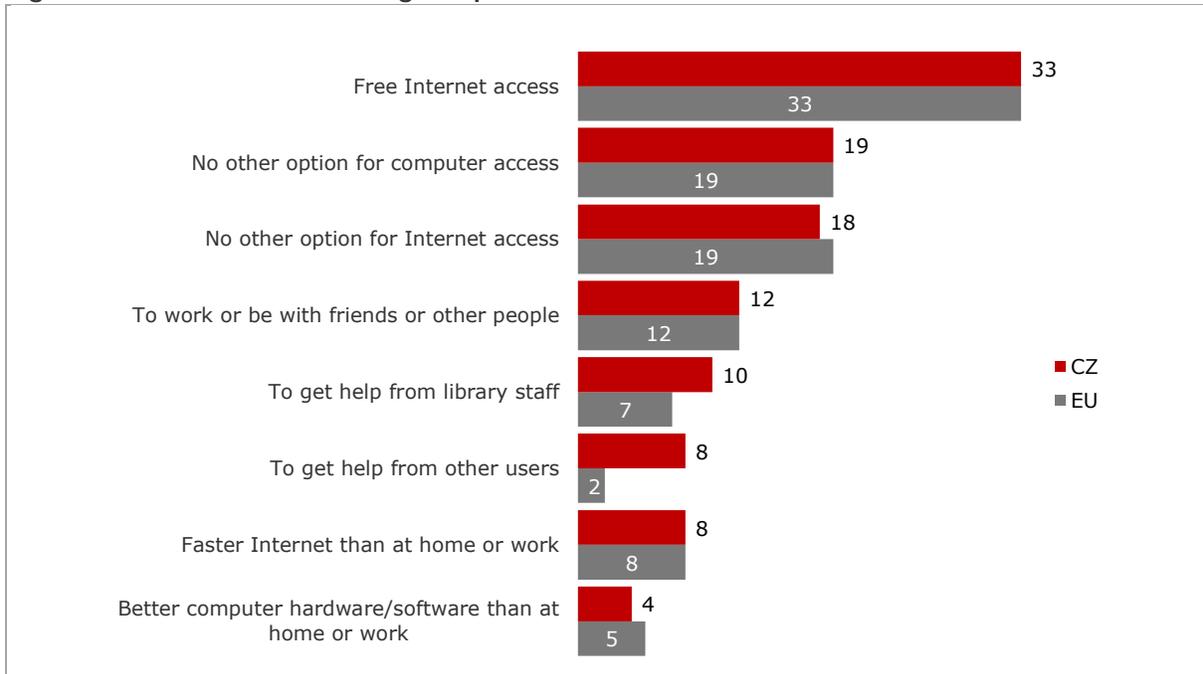
### **3.2 Reasons for using PACs**

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 17 EU countries as a whole, and within the Czech Republic, the primary motivation for PAC users is the free nature of the service.

Almost one in five users in the Czech Republic mentioned that they had no other option for computer access (19%) or Internet access (18%), similar to the EU averages.

Users in the Czech Republic were more likely than users in the 17 EU countries as a whole to have mentioned getting help from other users (8% versus 2%) or getting help from library staff (10% versus 7%) as 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- CZ (697); 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 the Czech Republic, 15% of PAC users said that they had no other options for accessing the internet (compared with 11% across the EU), and a further 15% that there was no other source of free internet for them (in line with 14% across the EU). Overall, it is estimated that around 90,000 PAC users in the Czech Republic (30% of PAC users) had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.

The availability of other options for accessing the internet varied most notably by age: 40-54 year olds (24%) and 55-64 year olds (33%) were particularly likely to indicate that they did not have any other options for accessing the internet, particularly when compared those aged 15-24 (3%).

Users in the Czech Republic were slightly less likely to place a high value on the PAC service than users across the 17 EU countries, as shown in Figure 5. Overall, 90% of PAC users in the Czech Republic said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, similar to the figure for PAC users across the EU (92%). However, PAC users in the Czech Republic were somewhat less likely to say that the service was extremely valuable (27%) compared with the EU average (36%).

The library's computers and internet connection were valued particularly highly in the Czech Republic by users aged 65 and over where over two fifths (45%) rated the services as extremely valuable.

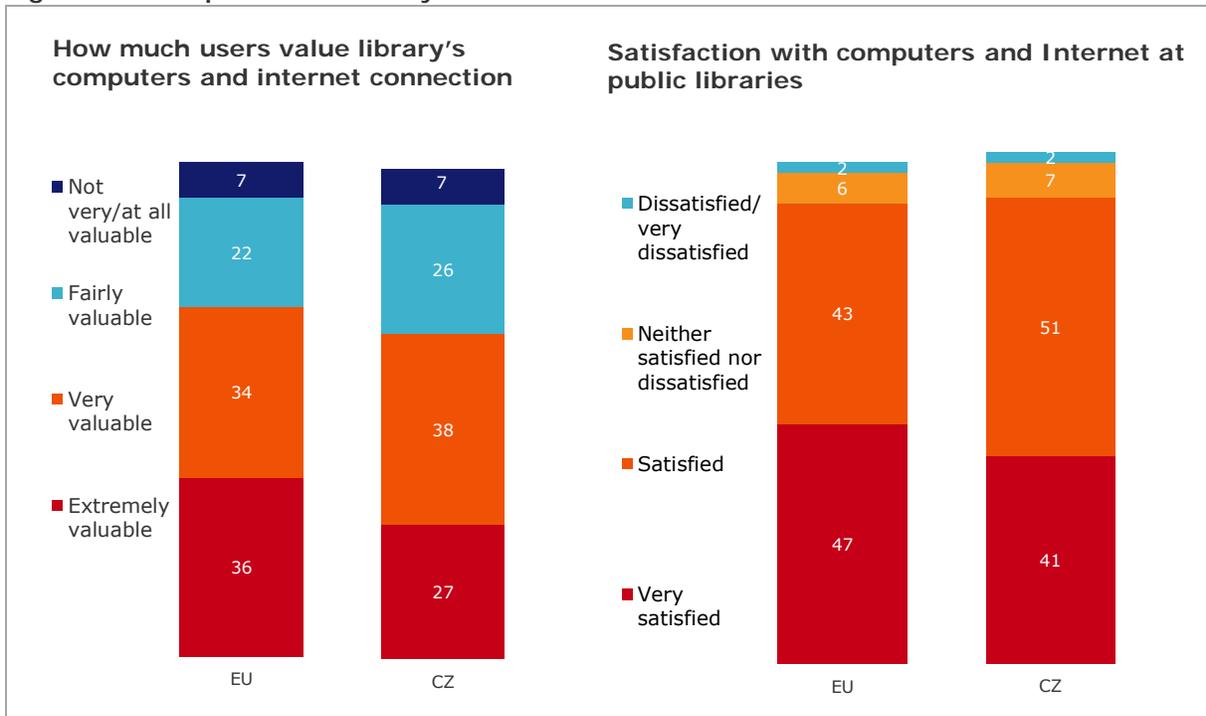
Users in the qualitative research were asked what the main reasons for using library ICT were, and one of the most commonly cited reasons was the free of charge nature of the service. Some users commented that they would like to have longer than the maximum usage time per day however. In one library in the sample, users who were not unemployed or senior citizens were charged a small fee, but on the whole users saw this as acceptable. Users also mentioned the training courses offered by libraries, and for

some, particularly older users, the library was where they had first learned to use ICT. Further, the advice and support offered by staff was another key attraction of using ICT in the library, as staff were always on hand to ask for help in the event of any problems. For some users, the library was the only place they knew that provided free internet and training courses and found it a trustworthy and familiar environment in which to learn.

*"I do not know if I would go somewhere else for an ICT course, the library has a beautiful atmosphere and, moreover, I am not aware of such a possibility anyway."  
(Recent user, Woman, 40–64 years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

In the library survey, satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users, as shown in Figure 5. Over nine in ten PAC users in the Czech Republic (92%) said that they were satisfied, similar to the EU average (91%). Around two in five users (41%) said that they were very satisfied, slightly lower than the EU average (47%).

**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. CZ (697); EU (11716)

In the Czech Republic, six out of ten PAC users (61%) said that when they go to a library to use a computer they find a free computer straightaway, lower than the EU average (72%). Around a quarter of users (26%) said that they have to wait up to 10 minutes, compared with the EU average of 16%. One in ten (10%) said that they have to wait at least 10 minutes for a computer to be available (compared with 7% across the EU).

In the qualitative research, the number of computers and other hardware varied significantly, and was linked with the size of the library:

- Library A: 11 computers, 1 copier, 1 printer, 2 reading devices, 1 scanner;
- Library B: 12 computers, 1 copier, some printers, an interactive board in the classroom;
- Library C: 90 computers, copiers in every department, 50 printers, 2 reading devices, 20 scanners;
- Library D: 22 computers, copiers and printers in every department, some scanners;
- Library E: over 200 computers, copiers and printers in the majority of departments, 50 reading devices, no scanners, due to copyright issues.

In terms of software, all libraries provided MS Office on some at least of the computers and an internal program connected with the library catalogue. In some of the libraries, graphics programs for photo editing or access to e-magazines and full text databases such as EBSCO were also available. Software with audio output for the blind or sight-impaired was also provided in some libraries, and one library in the sample had Mac Books with advanced software for audio, video and photo editing. However use of this advanced software was limited as there were no staff with sufficient knowledge of the software to teach it to users.

Library managers took the view that their hardware was relatively up to date, and certainly sufficient for meeting the needs of users. The Library manager in Library E mentioned that they put the most emphasis on updating software, resulting in it being more modern than the hardware.

Demand for reading devices was reported as being particularly high, and library staff did not feel they had enough devices to meet the demand.

*"We have 50 reading devices that users can borrow. We intentionally got many types of reading devices, so people can try them and see which one best suits them. The demand for this hardware is really high." (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Czech Republic)*

Internet access was provided on at least some computers in all libraries. Staff considered the internet connection speed to be fast enough to carry out common tasks such as emailing and web browsing, but some managers admitted there were problems with download speed or handling bigger files or videos, especially during times of peak usage.

Users in general perceived the number of computers and other hardware to be sufficient, although in some semi-rural libraries there was mention of occasions, particularly during peak hours, when capacity was full and there were no free computers.

*"There are not enough computers on some work days and, after your one free hour, you have to think about buying more time on the computers in the Info centre [the part of the library with paid internet] and sometimes, even there, you realize that all the computers are occupied." (User, Woman, 25–39 years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

*"More and more children go to the library, they're on Facebook; I need to do things related to my work and none of the computers are available." (User, Man, 40–64 years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

Similar to library managers, users reported that the computer hardware worked reliably and any problems they had experienced had been rare and quickly solved. Users thought the hardware and

software was sufficiently up to date and suitable for meeting their needs, and often of better standard than they had previously experienced.

*“The ICT equipment in the library is much faster and more modern than what I have at home.” (User, Woman, 40–64 years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

Generally, access to the internet was evaluated very positively, but the speed of the internet connection was sometimes perceived as slightly problematic, especially when there were a lot of people using the internet at the same time. Some regular users claimed to know which computers were faster than others, although it was not clear whether this was due to differences between PCs or due to internet connection speeds. Awareness of the WiFi service was high, although usage was low as users did not have their own laptops.

## **4. Impressions of public libraries**

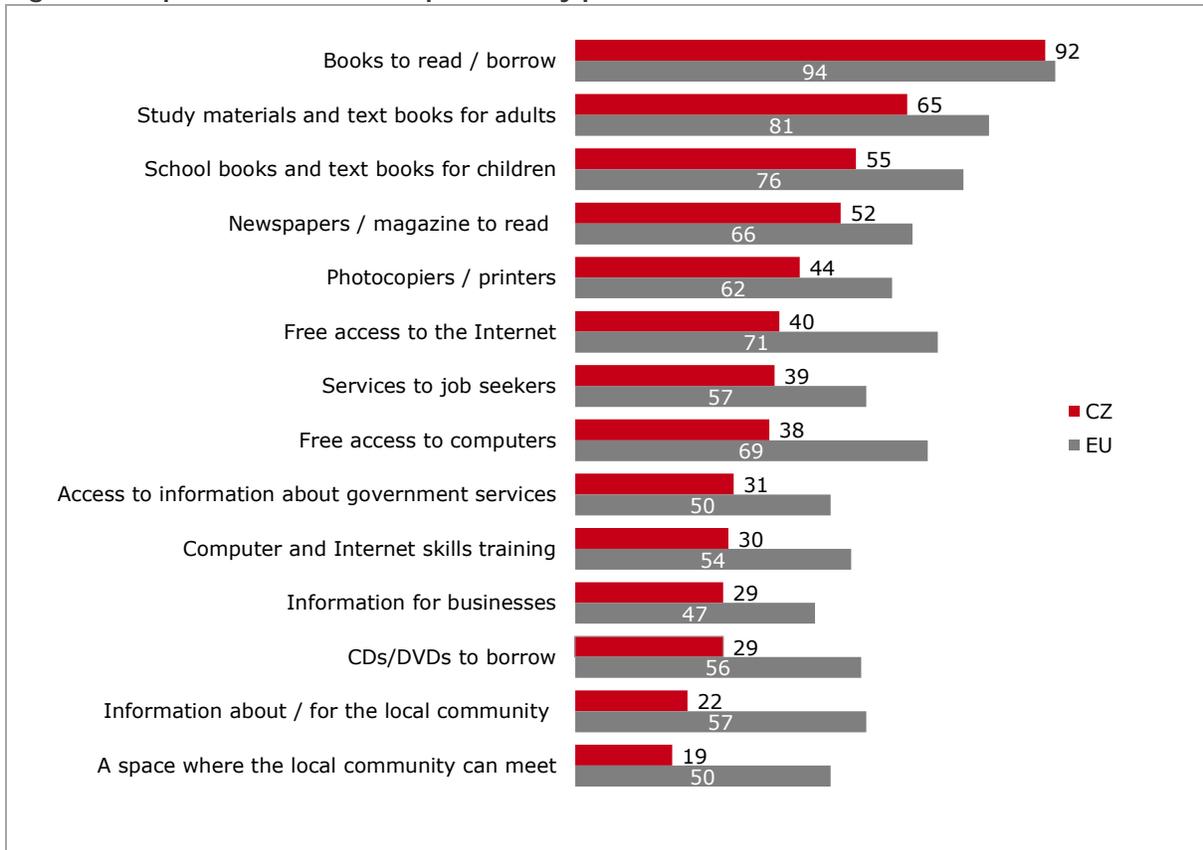
### **4.1 Importance of library services**

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

Apart from the core service of ‘books to read or borrow’, users in the Czech Republic were much less likely than users across the EU to rate services as 4 or 5 on the scale. The core service of ‘books to read or borrow’ was considered the most important, rated as important by 92% of users in the Czech Republic (and 94% across the EU). This was followed by ‘study materials and text books for adults (65% compared with EU average 81%), ‘school books and text books for children (55% vs. EU average 76%) and ‘newspapers/magazines to read’ (52% vs. 66%).

Users in the Czech Republic were much less likely than the EU average to rate ‘Free access to the internet’ and ‘free access to computers’ as important library services, around four in ten considering each important, compared with the equivalent figure of around seven in ten users across Europe. Three in ten users in the Czech Republic (30%) 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 - CZ (1402); EU (24253)

In the qualitative research, users were very positive about the library environment, describing it with words such as cultural, pleasant, trustworthy and sometimes even homely. The majority of respondents felt that it was the library staff who made the library a pleasant and welcoming place.

*“Nice, helpful, polite staff who do things beyond their obligation – this makes the environment of the library nice.” (User, Woman, 65+ years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic).*

Some users also perceived their local library as being modern and dynamic (namely in Libraries B and C, whose buildings have recently been reconstructed) and seemed proud of it.

## 4.2 Effectiveness and funding of public libraries

Two thirds (67%) of the general public in the Czech Republic (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 slightly higher than the average across the 17 EU survey countries of 64%.

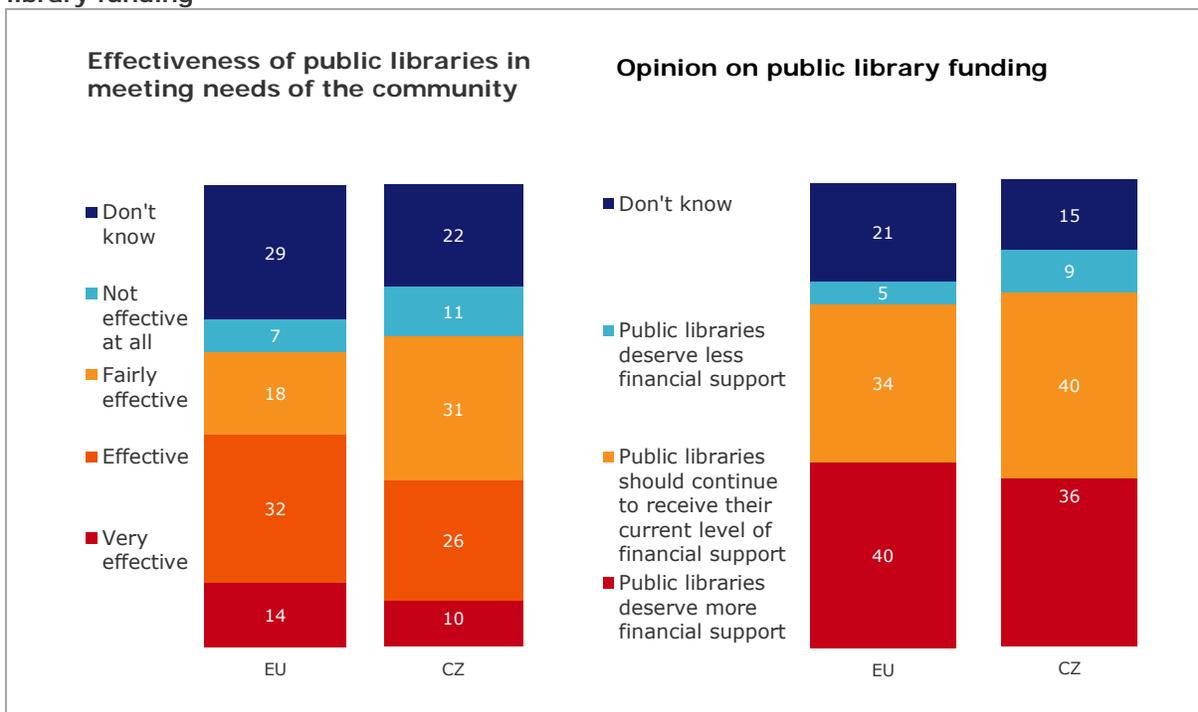
Library users were almost unanimous and PAC users were unanimous in their opinion that libraries were effective in meeting the needs of their local community – 92% of all library users in the Czech Republic felt they were effective, rising to 100% among PAC users.

Just over a third (36%) of the public in the Czech Republic felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, slightly lower than the average of all 17 EU countries (40%). Most of the

remainder either felt that the funding should continue as at present (40%) or did not express an opinion (15%). Under one in ten adults (9%) in the Czech Republic felt that public libraries deserve *less* financial support, although this was still nearly twice 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 – 61% of all library users and 66% 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**



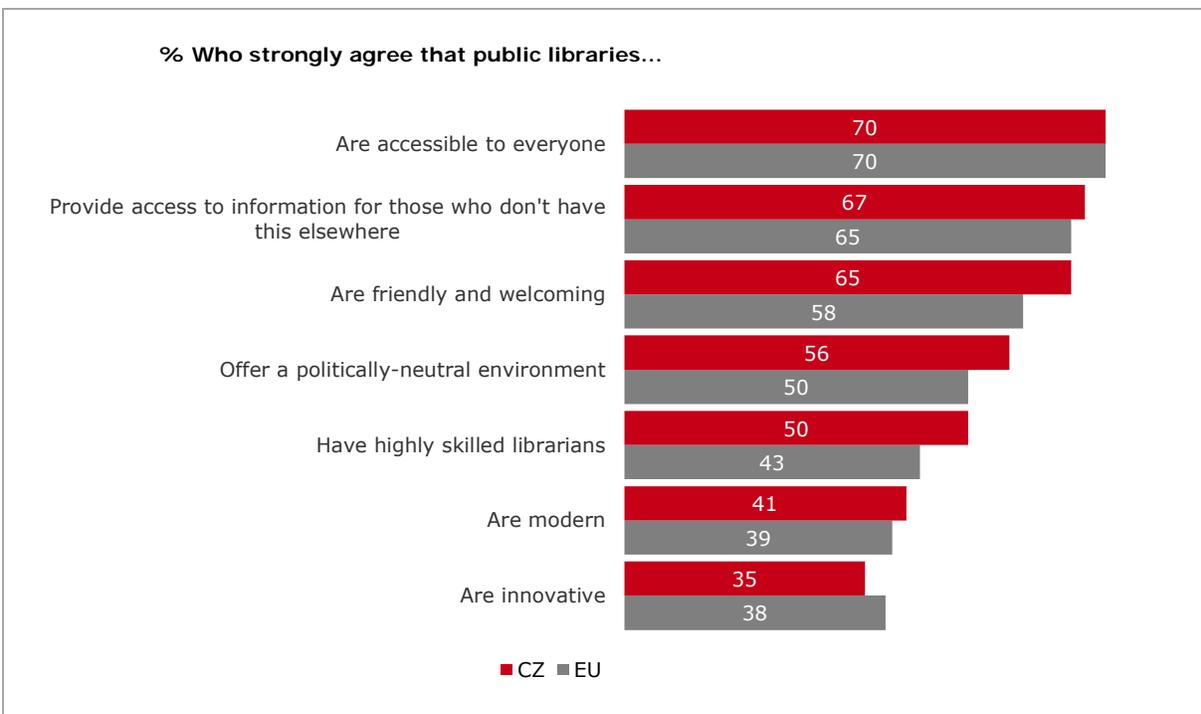
Source: Omnibus survey- Q6 How effective do you think your local public library is at meeting the needs of your community? & Q7 Which of the following statements represents most closely your opinion regarding the current funding for public libraries?

Base: All adults - CZ (986); 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 the Czech Republic and EU who strongly agreed with each of these statements. Library users in the Czech Republic were more likely than the EU average to strongly agree that libraries 'Are friendly and welcoming' (65% CZ compared with 58% EU), 'Have highly skilled librarians' (50% CZ compared with 43% EU) and that they 'Offer a politically-neutral environment' (56% CZ compared with 50% EU). Across the other measures included in the survey, the opinions of library users in the Czech Republic were broadly similar to those of users in the 17 EU countries as a whole.

**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. CZ (1402); EU (24253)

## 5. Informal and non-formal learning

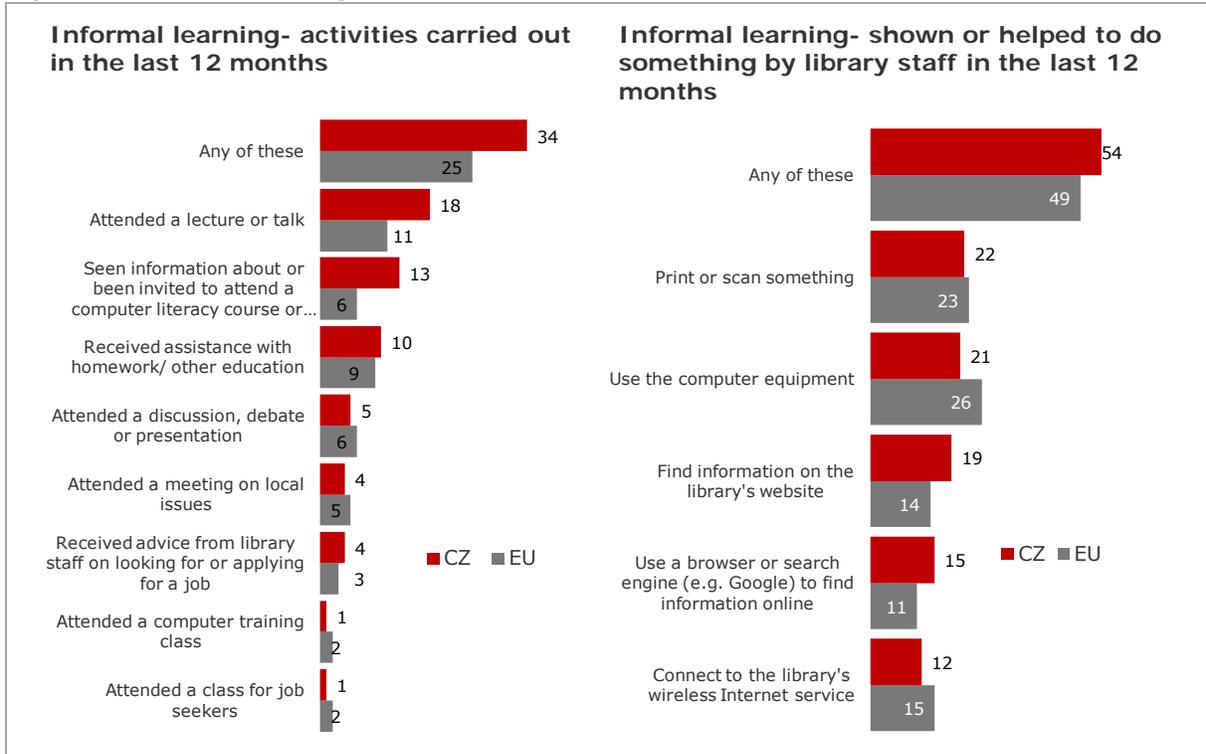
Public libraries are key players in the delivery of the non-formal/informal component of the European Commission’s lifelong learning policy, particularly with regard to *inclusive* delivery. The role of libraries in providing education to users was explored through asking all library users whether or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

Overall, in the Czech Republic around a third of all users (34%) had taken part in one of the educational activities in libraries asked about in the last 12 months, slightly higher than the EU average of 25%.

In four of the educational activities asked about – attending a discussion/debate/presentation, receiving assistance with homework or other education, attending a computer training course and receiving advice from library staff – engagement levels among library users in the Czech Republic were broadly in line with those for the 17 EU countries as a whole. For the other educational activities, engagement levels in the Czech Republic were higher than for the EU as a whole in two - attending a lecture/talk (CZ 18% vs. EU average 11%) and seeing information or being invited to a computer literacy training course (CZ 13% vs. EU 6%) (Figure 9).

In terms of computer training, c.25,000 adults in the Czech Republic 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 - CZ (1402); EU (24253). C17- All PAC users – the Czech Republic (697); EU (11716).

As Figure 9 shows, public library staff play a key role in assisting library users in informal learning. Overall, just over half (54%) of library users in the Czech Republic had been shown or helped to do something by a member of library staff within the last 12 months, broadly in line with the EU average of 49%.

The most common ways in which library staff assisted library users in the Czech Republic were with using the computer equipment, printing or scanning something or finding information on the library’s website. Around one in five users said that library staff helped them with these tasks. These were followed by help with using a browser/search engine to find information, mentioned by around one in seven users, and help with connection to the library’s wireless Internet service mentioned by around one in eight users. In the qualitative research, users were very positive about the support they had received from the library staff. They appreciated that staff were able to provide immediate help when they came across difficulties when using the ICT services, which saved users time struggling to resolve an issue.

*“I always sit at the computer closest to the staff and, when I get lost, I immediately ask them.” (User, Man, 40–64 years, Urban, Czech Republic)*

Advice from staff was reported to improve users’ skills so that they were able to solve problems or perform a task more competently in the future.

*"Their advice pushes you forward; you learn something and know how to behave in similar situations in the future." (User, Woman, 25–39 years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

Staff were reported to be always willing to help and able to answer users' questions and provide advice, which made users feel confident that they could try new things because they knew there was a staff member who they could trust to help them when needed.

*"They're close to me, I'm not afraid of them being unwilling, I know I can ask." (User, Man, Urban, 40–64 years, Czech Republic)*

Having assistance from someone in person was thought to be much more helpful than reading guidance information.

*"I need advice from a person. My children gave me some manual, but I understand better when the explanation comes from a person. Moreover, I can further question them when something is not clear." (User, Woman, 40–64 years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

For those who had attended a training course, staff were on hand to provide a refresher on information they had been taught on the course, or when they found something they had learnt on a course did not work.

As helpful staff was very important for respondents, it was hard for them to imagine them not being there.

*"If they didn't have the staff here that they do, we would just give up and go home when something goes wrong with the PC." (User, Woman, 20–39 years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic).*

Aside from the informal support and advice available to users, library provided more structured training courses in ICT. These covered more basic subjects such as basic computer usage, internet and MS Office usage. Some libraries also offered more advanced courses in subjects such as digital photography, internet security, social networks and how to use reading devices. An example of a more innovative project in one library was called 'internet Mondays', when a group of users with advanced ICT knowledge met together in the library every Monday to discuss and exchange information about ICT, particularly in connection with the internet. This project, which helped to connect people with the same interests, had a very positive response.

Overall, training courses were evaluated very positively by those who took part in them, and the beneficial impacts are discussed in chapter 8. The level of awareness among users of training available in the library was also good.

## **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.

Just over a third (35%) of PAC users in the Czech Republic had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, slightly higher than the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 100,000 PAC users in the Czech Republic who had used PAC for employment related activity.

Overall, 6% of PAC users in the Czech Republic had used a PAC to apply for a job (either in the Czech Republic or in another EU country) in the last 12 months - this represents approximately 18,500 adults in the Czech Republic. Of those respondents who applied for a job through PAC, 32% said that they were successful. This means that in all 2% of PAC users in the Czech Republic – or an estimated 6,000 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 fifth (20%) of PAC users in the Czech Republic 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 the Czech Republic was in helping them to improve the skills needed in their current job (9% compared with an EU average of 4%), followed by help with writing a CV (7% compared with an EU average of 5%) and assistance with looking for a job online (6% vs. 3%).

**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		
%	CZ	EU	%	CZ	EU
<b>Any listed below</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>Any listed below</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>
Find information about searching and/or applying for jobs	13	14	Improve skills needed in your current job	9	4
Search for jobs	10	13	How to write a CV	7	5
Write a CV or covering letter	10	12	How to develop skills needed to obtain a job	4	2
Improve skills needed in your current job	14	11	How to look for a job online (such as finding a recruitment company, searching for information about an employer)	6	3
Apply for jobs in this country	5	10	How to apply for a job online	3	2
Search for information about an employer	11	8	How to look for and apply for jobs in other EU countries	*	1
Find a recruitment company	6	5			
Use spread sheet/data	3	3			
Search for jobs in other EU countries	3	2			
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. CZ (697); EU (11716).

PAC users were asked whether they had used PACs for a range of business-related activities in the last 3 months. Only 1% of PAC users had used a PAC for participating in professional networks, compared with the EU average of 6%. Nearly half (47%) had used a PAC for finding information related to a business they worked in, more than twice the EU average of 20%, possibly a reflection of the emphasis that Czech libraries place on information services targeting the business community. A small minority (4%) of PAC users had used a PAC for finding ways or places to sell their own products or goods (in line with the EU average of 4%).

The qualitative research found that libraries provided employment support through structured courses on ICT that were specifically for unemployed users. More informally, library staff had supported users to find employment, such as by providing advice to those who were writing a CV using library ICT services. Some users felt the library ICT services had helped them find employment just by allowing them to go online and look at jobs websites and email potential employers.

*"I went on the internet at the library and was searching for work. One day, I found an advertisement on www.prace.cz [webpages that post job opportunities], sent an e-mail into the organization and they took me on, at least part-time." (User, Woman, 16–24 years, Urban, Czech Republic)*

*"I've seen library staff help a guy who was sitting next to me on the computer. He was searching for a job and the librarian sat next to him and advised him how to write a CV; how to send it to a potential employer via e-mail, etc. He would definitely not have been able to do it without her." (User, Woman, 65+, Urban, Czech Republic)*

*"The ICT in the library helps me in finding a job. Thanks to it, I search for job opportunities on the internet, write e-mails and send in CVs." (User, Man, 40–64 years, Urban, Czech Republic)*

## **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.

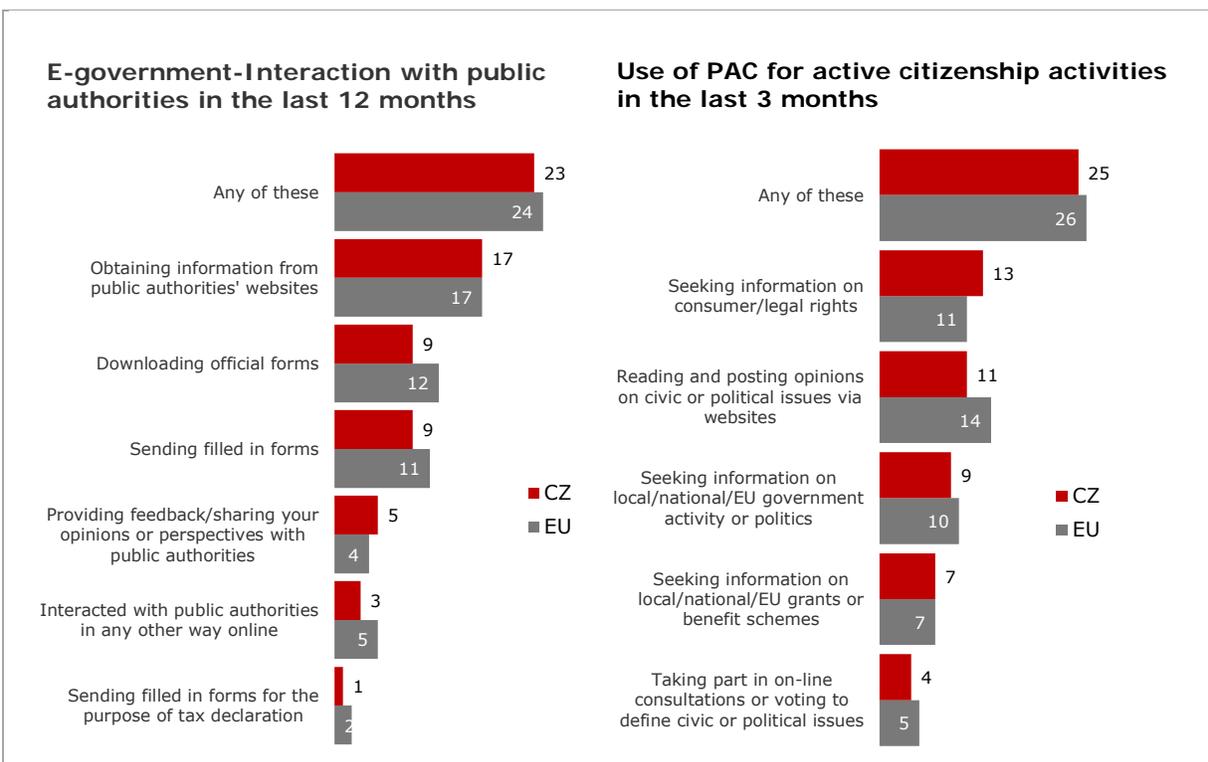
According to Eurostat data, E-government usage by individuals in the Czech Republic is broadly in line with the EU average. Around two fifths (42%) of adults in the Czech Republic had used the internet in the last 12 months to interact with public authorities, in line with the EU average of 41%. Citizens in the Czech Republic were somewhat less likely than the EU average to use the Internet to obtain information from public authorities' web sites (27% compared with 35%).

The library survey found that around one in five PAC users in the Czech Republic (23%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, in line with the EU average (24%), but much lower than the Eurostat finding for all adults in the Czech Republic. The most common ways in which PAC users

in the Czech Republic interacted with public authorities were to obtain information from public authorities' websites (17%), downloading official forms (9%) and sending filled in forms (9%). These figures were broadly in line with the proportions across the EU countries, but lower than the Eurostat findings for all adults in the Czech Republic.

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, one in four PAC users in the Czech Republic (25%) had used PAC for engagement activities in the past 3 months, similar to the average for users across the 17 EU countries as a whole (26%). The two most common community engagement activities mentioned by users in the Czech Republic were seeking information on consumer/legal rights (13% the Czech Republic compared with 11% EU) and reading or posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (11% the Czech Republic compared with 14% 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. CZ (697); EU (11716)

The qualitative research found that support in e-government and civic participation was included in structured ICT courses provided by the library, which showed users local government websites and how to use them. One library had adopted an innovative approach to supporting civic participation by assisting users with filling in online census forms and voting for a local 'Building of the Year' contest.

*“Our library participated in the recent census. People could fill in the form online on our computer with the assistance of library staff, if needed. Also, the online voting for the building of the year was conducted here in the library.” (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Czech Republic)*

Another library in the qualitative sample placed surveys on their computers that could be completed by users online to help them express their views on local public affairs issues.

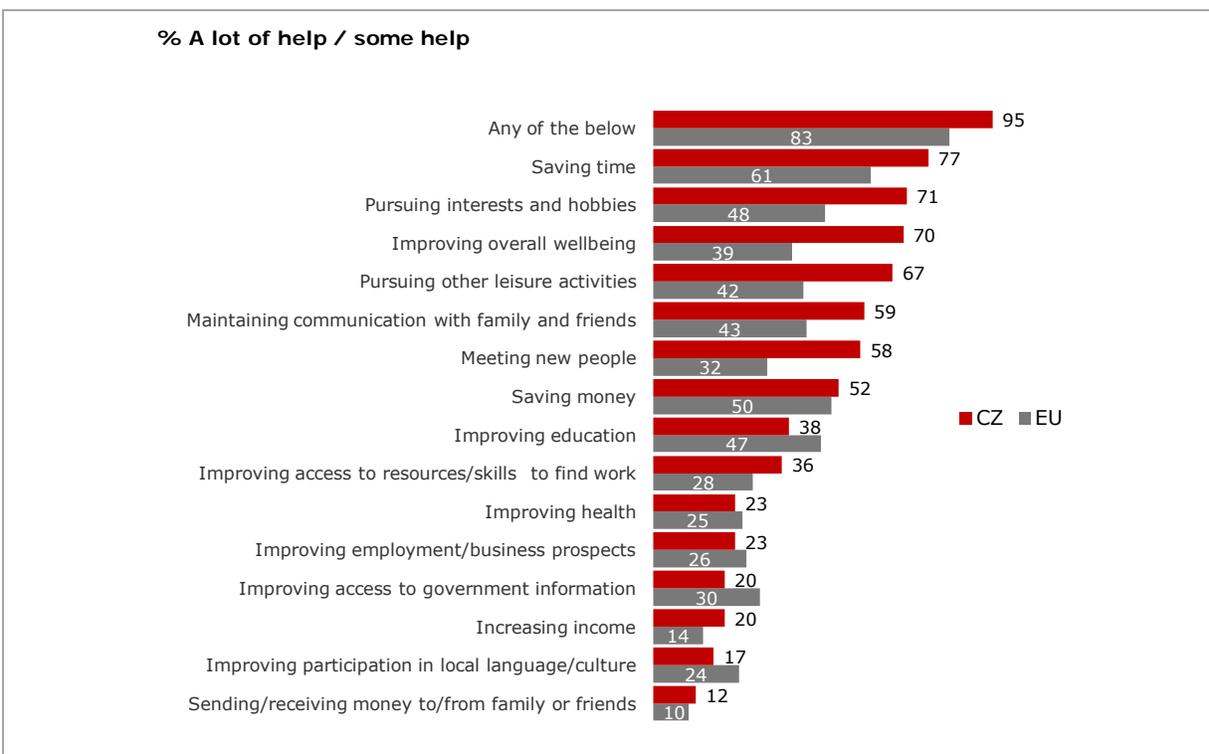
## 8. Impacts

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.

More than nine in ten PAC users in the Czech Republic (95%) 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 280,000 people in the Czech Republic.

Figure 12 shows the proportions who said PAC use had been helpful in each area, within the Czech Republic 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- the Czech Republic (697); EU (11716).

As well as the general area of saving time (77% CZ, 61% EU), PAC use was rated as helpful across a range of leisure and social areas such as pursuing interests and hobbies (71% CZ, 48% EU), pursuing other leisure activities (67% CZ, 42% EU), improving overall wellbeing 70% CZ, 39% EU) and maintaining communication with family and friends (59% CZ, 43% EU). Half of PAC users (50%) in the Czech Republic and EU said PAC was helpful in saving money, which represents an estimated 155,000 PAC users in the Czech Republic.

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

- 115,000 people to improve their education
- 70,000 people to improve their employment or business prospects
- 110,000 people to improve their access to resources necessary to find work
- 60,000 people to increase their income
- 60,000 people to improve their access to government information services

In the qualitative research, users reported various positive impacts of using ICT in the library. Many felt more confident, educated and less socially excluded when it came to using ICT, and more independent because they were able to find information from different areas on the internet and communicate through new channels. Increased self-confidence had come through the realisation that users were still able to successfully learn new things, and moreover, were not alone in having low skills in ICT initially and that it was therefore nothing to be ashamed of.

*"When I speak with someone who's younger and I tell them 'send it to me via e-mail', they are shocked." (User, Woman, 65+ years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

*"My self-confidence has increased. I can join the conversation about ICT. I know what it's about. (Recent first-time user, Woman, 40–64 years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

Respondents mentioned plenty of positive examples that depicted what they were able to do using ICT in the public library (and which they were not able to do in the past) and how ICT services in the library have influenced and changed their lives, improving their digital skills, lifelong learning, relationships and communication, and helping them develop interests and hobbies:

- Digital skills

*"My son got married in September and we had lots of photos from the wedding. I created a beautiful file album with these photos. I put a lot of work into it and used information I had learned in the course. I arranged all of the photos chronologically, etc. I was really happy and proud of the result. And you know what? My family noticed my progress. My son was surprised and praised me for my ability to arrange photos on my own." (User, Woman, 40–64, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

- Lifelong learning

Older people in particular appreciated that, thanks to the courses, they were more in touch with contemporary trends they had missed in the past.

*"We're able to keep up with modern life. It has increased my self-confidence; I don't feel disadvantaged in contemporary society in regard to this area anymore." (Recent first-time user, Woman, 40–64 years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

*"I learned new things that I had not known. For example, I now very often use online dictionaries, e-translators and encyclopaedias." (User, Man, 65+ years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

■ Relationships and communication

In addition to the social opportunities provided by attending training courses with others in the same position, users explained that the ICT skills they had learnt had increased their opportunities to communicate and socialise with others.

*"I am very proud of my ability to write an e-mail and send it to my son or to the government office. I can arrange lots of stuff. Communication is key for me." (User, Man, 65+ years, Urban, Czech Republic)*

*"It opened the world for me. Some of my relatives immigrated to Texas and then, I was creating a family tree, and I found these relatives thanks to the internet. Now we are in contact via the internet and we visited them last year." (User, Woman, 40–64 years, Semi-rural, Czech Republic)*

■ Hobbies and interests

*"Thanks to the ICT services in our library, I can compile my own book about Greek mythology. I've always wanted to do it, but I would have to beg my family to let me spend some time on their computer, but with ICT available in the library, I have nothing stopping me from doing it. I love sitting here for hours and writing my book." (User, Man, 40–64 years, Urban, Czech Republic)*