

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

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 France and compares the results to the EU total.

The public library landscape

- The desk research estimates that there are 7,530 public libraries in France (excluding book access points), which equates to 1.2 libraries per 10,000 population, similar to the average of 1.3 libraries per 10,000 population across the EU.
- Public access computers are offered by about three quarters of libraries in France.

Library and PAC usage

- An estimated 13.6 million adults in France, around a quarter of adults in the country (26%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 0.8 million adults in France, 2% of adults, had used PACs in the last 12 months, significantly lower than the average of 4% of adults across the EU.
- PAC users in France had a slightly older age profile than the EU average, and were more likely to be still studying or to have remained in full-time education beyond the age of 19. They were also more likely to live in a small or middle sized town.
- It is clear that across the EU, and in France, the primary motivation for PAC users is the free nature of the service, although the proportion of users in France citing this as a main reason (41%) is higher than the EU average (33%). PAC users in France (27%) were more likely than the EU average (19%) to mention no other option for Internet access as a main reason for using PACs in libraries.
- Overall, it is estimated that 80,000 PAC users in France had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.
- The value placed on the PAC service in France is broadly similar to the EU average. Overall, 99% of PAC users in France said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users. Three over a third of PAC users in France (36%) said the service was extremely valuable, the same as the EU average (36%).
- Satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users: 92% of users in France were satisfied.

Perceptions and impacts of public libraries

- 'Free access to the internet' and 'free access to computers' were both rated as important by around seven out of ten library users in France, in line with the EU averages.
- A little under two thirds (63%) of the general public in France (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 similar to the average across the EU of 64%.
- Almost two fifths (38%) of the public in France felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, which was similar to the EU average (40%).
- Overall 85% of PAC users in France said their PAC use had delivered at least one impact for them, in line with the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 0.6 million people in France.
- Library users in France were less likely than the EU average to strongly agree that public libraries 'Have highly skilled librarians' (25% France compared with 43% EU), 'Are friendly and welcoming' (44% France, 58% EU), 'Are accessible to everyone' (62% France, 70% EU) and 'Offer a politically-neutral environment' (42% France, 50% EU).

Informal and non-formal learning

- In France 26% of library users had taken part in an educational activity in a library in the last 12 months, in line with the EU average of 25%.

Employment and use of PACs for business

- Just under a quarter (23%) of PAC users in France had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, below the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 155,000 PAC users in France who had used PAC for employment related activity.
- An estimated 52,500 PAC users in France had used a PAC to apply for a job in the last 12 months, and an estimated 12,000 adults were successful in securing employment by this means.

E-government and active citizenship

- The library survey found that around one in six PAC users in France (16%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, below the EU average of one in four (24%). The most common ways in which PAC users in France interacted with public authorities were to obtain information from public authorities' websites (13%) and to download official forms (9%).
- Overall, around a quarter of PAC users in France (24%) had used PAC for civic engagement activities in the past 3 months, in line the average for users across the EU (26%). The two most common community engagement activities mentioned by users in France were seeking information on consumer/legal rights (11%) and seeking information on local/national/EU government activity or politics (11%), with both in line with EU averages.

1. Background and methodology

1.1 Context for the research

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

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

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

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

1.2 Research objectives

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

1.3 Research method

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

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

² [Eurostat](#), 2010

³ [Eurostat](#), 2011

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

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

- A representative sample of 1,006 members of the public aged 15+ in France (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 France, 728 interviews were conducted with people who had not used Public Access Computers (PACs) in libraries (12,537 across the 17 countries) and 602 with those who had (11,716 across the 17 countries). The interviews in France were conducted in 25 libraries which were selected and contacted with help from a representative of Bibliothèque publique d'information. 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 France and compares the results to the EU total. EU results are based on findings from the 17 countries included in this study. Individual reports for each country surveyed have been produced as well as an overall report⁵.

Throughout this report where we refer to:

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

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

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

2. The public library landscape and internet provision

There are 7,530 public libraries in France⁶ (excluding book access points), which equates to 1.2 libraries per 10,000 population, similar to the average across the 17 EU countries of 1.3 libraries per 10,000. If

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)

⁶ "Bibliothèques municipales. Données d'activités 2010. Synthèse nationale.pdf"

book access points are included within the definition of libraries, then there are a total of 15,605 libraries in France, with an average of 2.4 per 10,000 population.

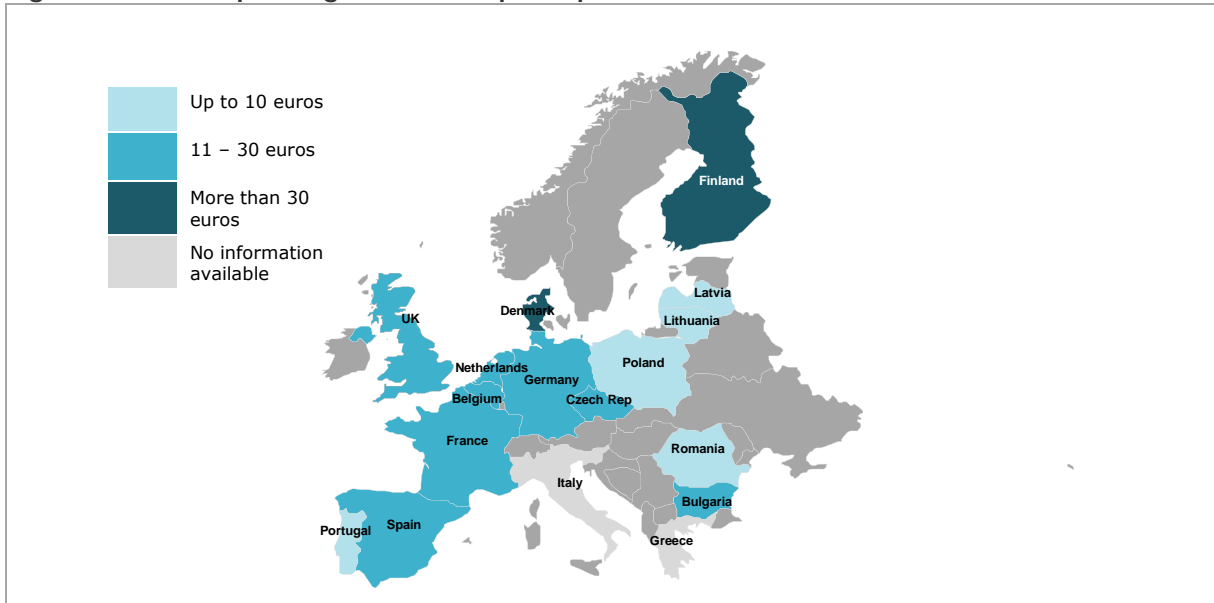
The public libraries in France are categorised into 3 types – 1st, 2nd and 3rd level – based on size (metrage² /inhabitant), budget, staff and opening hours (with additional book access points located in mostly rural areas). The 7,530 libraries break down as follows:

- 1,644 1st level
- 2,104 2nd level
- 3,782 3rd level

In 2010 the public libraries in France employed c.150,000 staff. Just under half of these were paid staff (47%) with the remainder made up of volunteers (53%). Public libraries are managed by local authorities (municipalities).

Annual public spending on libraries per capita in France at 26 Euros⁷ was similar to other Western European countries, as shown in the map below:

Figure 1: Annual spending on libraries per capita



Source: TNS desk research

PACs are offered by about three quarters of libraries in France.

Eurostat data (2011) on Internet access at home shows that 76% of households in France have access to the Internet, similar to the EU average (73%).

⁷ "Bibliothèques municipales. Données d'activités 2010. Synthèse nationale.pdf" – p48

3. Library and PAC usage

3.1 Access to libraries and PACs

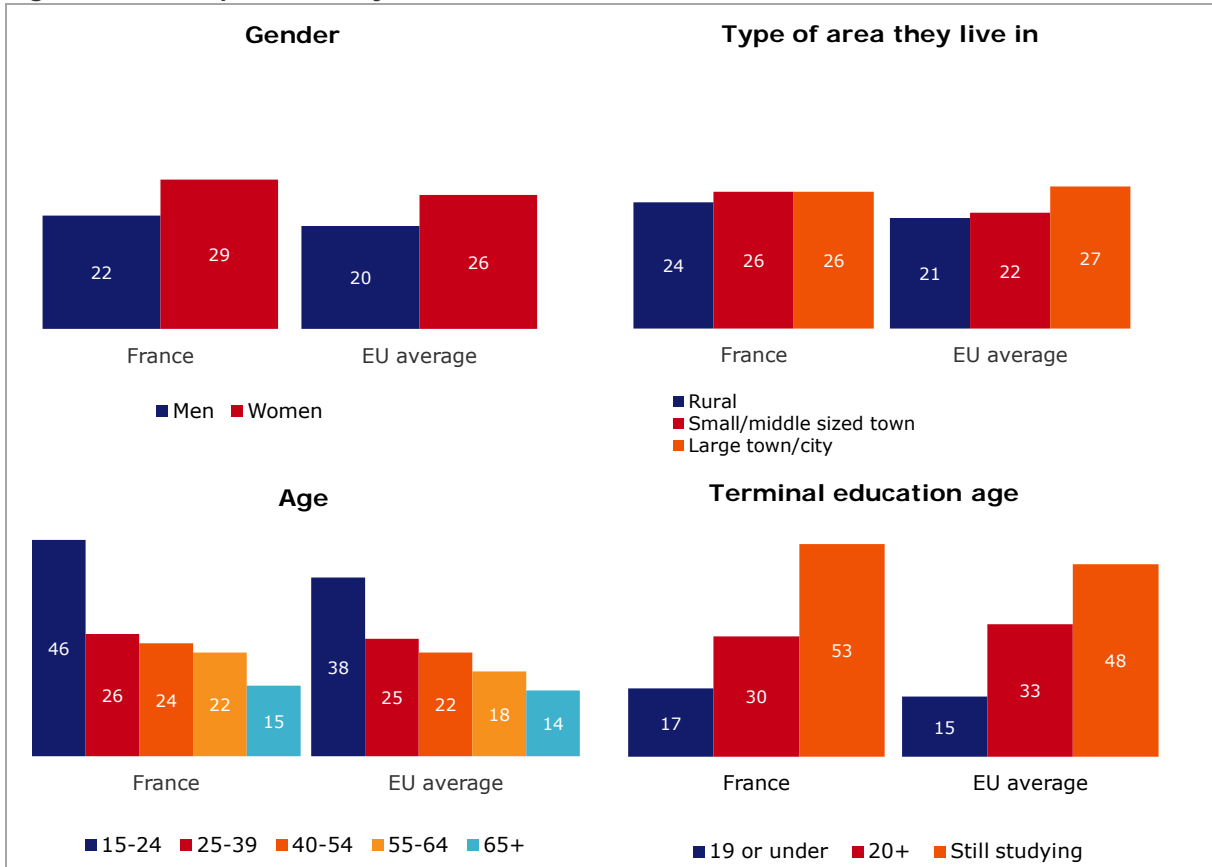
The general public survey found that library usage in France was in line the EU average.

- An estimated 13.6 million adults in France, around a quarter of adults in the country (26%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 8.3 million adults, just over one in seven adults in France (15%), had used a library at least once a month, similar to the EU average of 14%.

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

- Women (29%) were more likely than men (22%) to have visited a library, in line with the findings across the EU
- Library usage was highest among those aged 15-24 (46%), and usage decreased as age increased. Library use among 15-24 year olds in France was notably higher than the comparable EU average (38%). Across all other age groups library usage was broadly similar to the average.
- Library use was much higher among those who were still studying – over half of this group (53%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, slightly above the EU average (48%).
- Library use was similar across different types of area and broadly similar to the EU average.

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: France – All adults (1006), Men (471), Women (535), 15-24 (162), 25-39 (227), 40-54 (233) 55-64 (145), 65+ (239), Large town/city (185), Small town (547), Rural area (270), Finished education 19 or under (562), 20 or over (326), Still studying (104). 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 France, compared with across the EU, was:

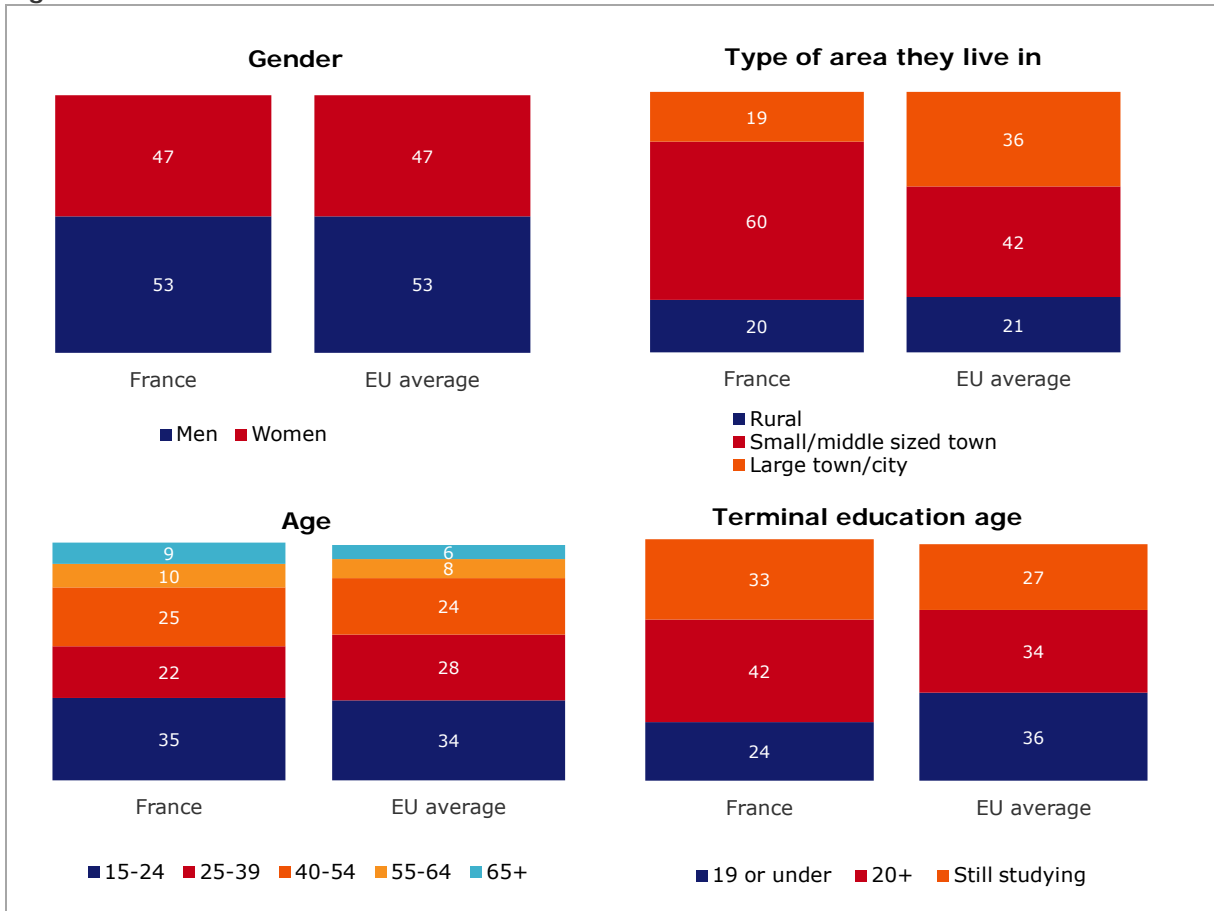
- 42% of library users in France were men and 58% women, the same profile as across the EU (42% men, 58% women)
- Users in France had a similar age profile to the EU average – 26% were aged 15-24, 23% aged 25-39, 25% aged 40-54, 13% aged 55-64 and 13% aged 65+; compared with the EU average of 25% aged 15-24, 26% aged 25-39, 25% aged 40-54, 12% aged 55-64 and 12% aged 65+.

Only one in twenty (5%) of those who had visited a library in France in the last 12 months had used a PAC, much lower than the EU average of 14%. When those who had not used a PAC were asked why this was, the large majority (80%) said they had no need to because they had a computer/internet at home. However, a significant minority (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 2% of adults in France had used PACs in the last 12 months, lower than the average of 4% of adults across the EU countries. This is estimated to be around 0.8 million adults in France.

PAC users in France had a slightly older age profile than the EU average, and were more likely to be still studying or to have remained in full-time education beyond the age of 19. They were also more likely to live in a small or middle sized town, 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: France (602), EU (11716).

About a quarter (27%) of PAC users in France made use of PACs at least once a week, compared with 23% across the EU, 32% doing so once to three times a month (compared with 29% across the EU). Around two fifths (41%) had used PACs once every three months or less often, compared with the EU average of 47%.

In the qualitative research, library staff identified a number of ways in which they had encouraged the use of ICT, including:

- The opening of spaces to make access easier: a shift from small enclosed spaces to open surfaces or areas which were intercommunicated and where ICT is fully integrated
- A spread of computer terminals across the entire space so that they were accessible everywhere
- The availability of specially equipped tables to allow visitors to come with their own computers and use the wireless connexion

- Evolution in the role of staff who had become more mobile and approached users so as to help them

Initiatives aimed at specific groups included:

- For senior citizens: workshops for an introduction to basic computer use, with informal and individualised assistance

"We have Thursdays for senior citizens as a kind of initiation to computing, they really need assistance" (Library Manager, Semi-rural, France)

- For handicapped people: the setting up of dedicated spaces with suitable equipment (such as CDs, keyboards and voice recognition), and working in partnership with relevant associations and organising workshops

"In the multimedia workshop we've introduced a space for the visually impaired with all the necessary equipment, so we can now develop partnerships with associations" (Senior Library Manager, Urban, France)

- For people on low incomes or the unemployed: the availability of dedicated spaces for IT work (such as computers, printers and scanners), sometimes even with spaces dedicated to looking for jobs with staff or producing a CV or guided job searches

- For immigrants: many spaces dedicated to self-learning of languages including French, with support for administrative tasks, and partnerships with relevant support associations

"We work with France Terre d'Asile which comes 4 hours a week to link up with Afghans and they now use the self-learning material and computers ..." (Library Manager, urban, France)

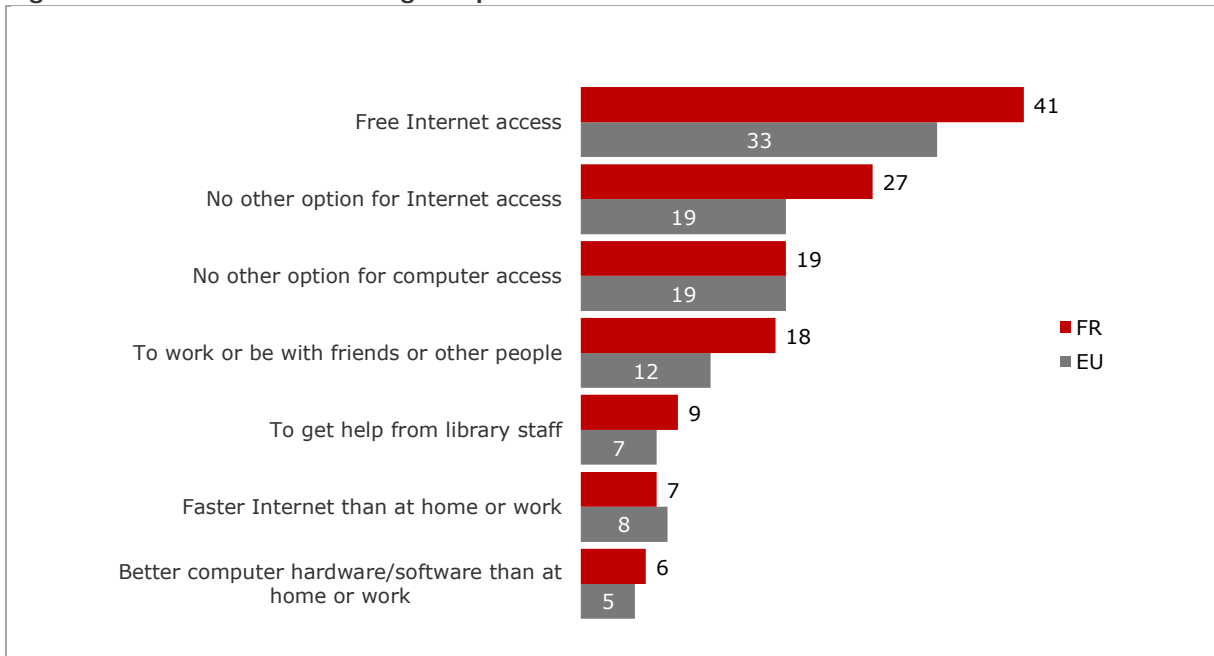
3.2 Reasons for using PACs

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 France, the primary motivation for PAC users is the free nature of the service; the proportion of users in France citing this as a main reason (41%) is higher than the EU average (33%).

Despite the proportion of households with Internet access at home in France (76%) being a little ahead of the proportion at the overall EU level (73%) - both figures from Eurostat data 2011 - PAC users in France were more likely than those at the overall EU level to have mentioned no other option for Internet access as a main reason for using PACs in libraries.

Users in France were also notably more likely than those elsewhere in the EU to have mentioned working or being with friends or other people (18% in France compared with 12% across the EU) as a reason 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- France (602); EU (11716)

In addition to the questioning on main reasons for using computers in libraries, PAC users were also asked two further 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 response to these questions, in France, 8% of PAC users said that they had no other options for accessing the internet (compared with 11% across the EU), and a further 4% that there was no other source of free internet for them (compared with 14% across the EU). Overall, it is estimated that 80,000 PAC users in France (12% of PAC users) had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.

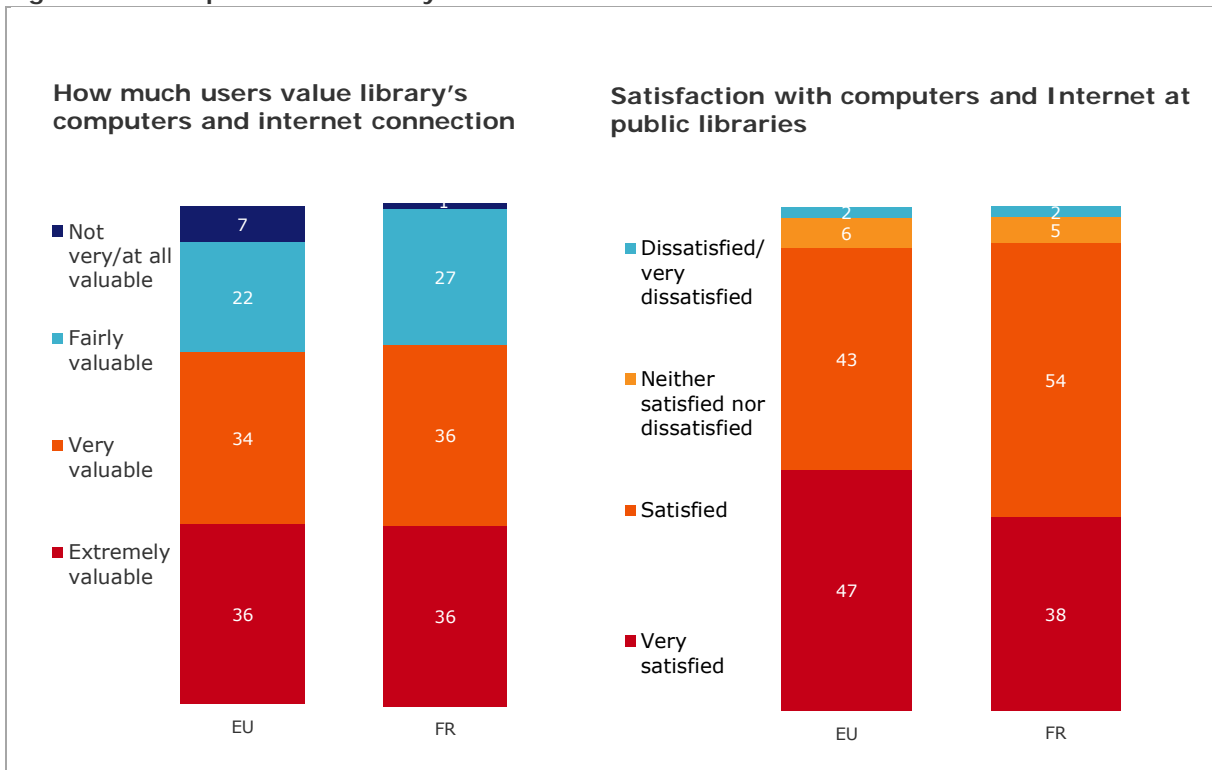
Older users (aged 55+) were particularly likely to indicate that they did not have any other options for accessing the internet, around one fifth (19%) saying that this was the case, compared with just 1% of 15-24 year olds, 8% of those aged 25-39 and 7% of 40-54 year olds.

The value placed on the PAC service among users in France was broadly similar to the EU average, as shown in Figure 5. Overall, 99% of PAC users in France said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users. Just over a third of PAC users in France (36%) said the service was extremely valuable, the same as the EU figure of 36%. A similar proportion of PAC users (36%) rated the service as very valuable, compared to the EU average of 34%. Users in France were more likely than users across the EU seventeen countries to rate the service as fairly valuable (27% versus 22% respectively), and less likely to rate the service as not very/not at all valuable (1% versus 7%).

The library's computers and internet connection were valued particularly highly in France by users who were born outside of the EU, more than half (52%) of whom 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 France (92%) said that they were satisfied, in line with the EU average (91%). However, users in France were less likely than users across the EU to have said that they were very satisfied (38% versus 47% respectively).

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. France (602); EU (11716)

In France, three quarters of PAC users (75%) said that when they go to a library to use a computer they find a free computer straightaway, similar to the EU average (72%). Around one in eight (12%) said that they have to wait up to 10 minutes, compared with the EU average of 16%) and one in ten (10%) said that they have to wait at least 10 minutes for a computer to be available, compared with the EU average of 7%.

In the qualitative research, according to the reports of library staff, the number of hardware and software facilities provided for users varied considerably by the size of library, ranging from 8 to 400 PCs. The quality of the hardware also varied considerably within and between libraries, with 2 of the 5 libraries having 'very good' condition stock and one perceiving theirs to be obsolete, expecting to renew it all in 2014. All libraries had Wifi connection but internet connection speed varied between libraries. Managers of one library in the qualitative sample thought their ICT equipment was too limited to answer the community's needs as they suffered from a lack of terminals, slow internet connections and a need to limit printing.

"We're not well enough equipped, we have just basic material which does not allow for downloading, we also have to limit the printing of really large documents, we have even

had to centralise our own print-outs at the town hall" (Library Manager, semi-rural, France)

Users, however, were on the whole satisfied with the ICT equipment in their library. Internet connections were considered to be sufficiently fast and only a few users in the sample had experience of not being able to access a PC quickly enough. The only significant area of concern was the length of connection time available to users, which at between thirty minutes and one hour was judged to be insufficient. Regarding users' perceptions of the modernity of equipment, there was again variation between libraries. Two libraries were seen as having new, high-quality equipment that was up-to-date with new technologies, such as e-books and tablets.

"When you arrive you see all the Macs with their big screens, and it all looks modern." (User, female, 25-40, France)

However another two libraries in the sample tended to be perceived as having obsolete stock that needed to be renewed

"You can no longer decipher the buttons on the keyboards, it all needs updating!" (Recent User, male, 40-64, France)

4. Impressions of public libraries

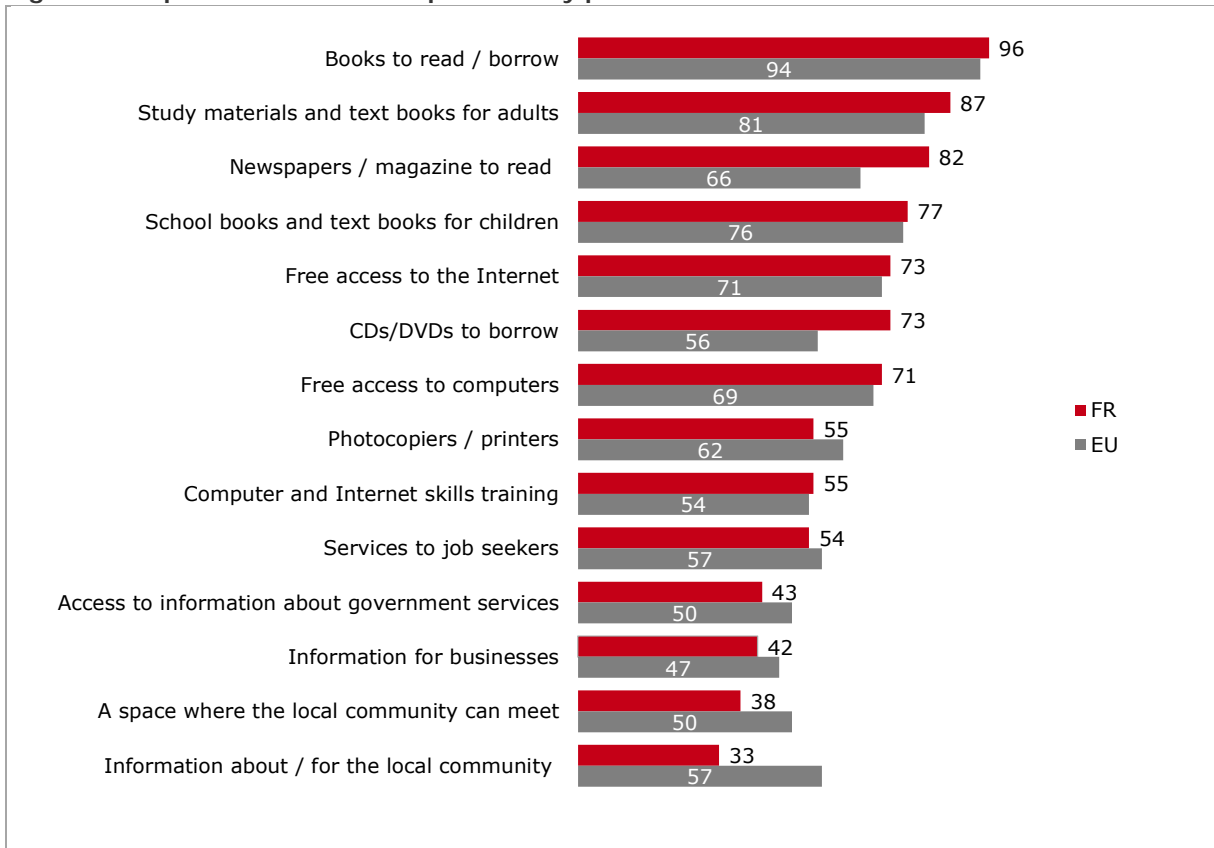
4.1 Importance of library services

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

Not surprisingly, the core service of 'books to read/borrow' was considered the most important, rated as important by 96% of users in France (and 94% across the EU). This was followed by 'study materials and text books for adults', with users in France (87%) somewhat more likely than the EU average (81%) to have rated this service as important.

'Free access to the internet' and 'free access to computers' were both rated as important by around seven out of ten library users in France, in line with the EU averages.

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 - France (1330); EU (24253)

4.2 Effectiveness and funding of public libraries

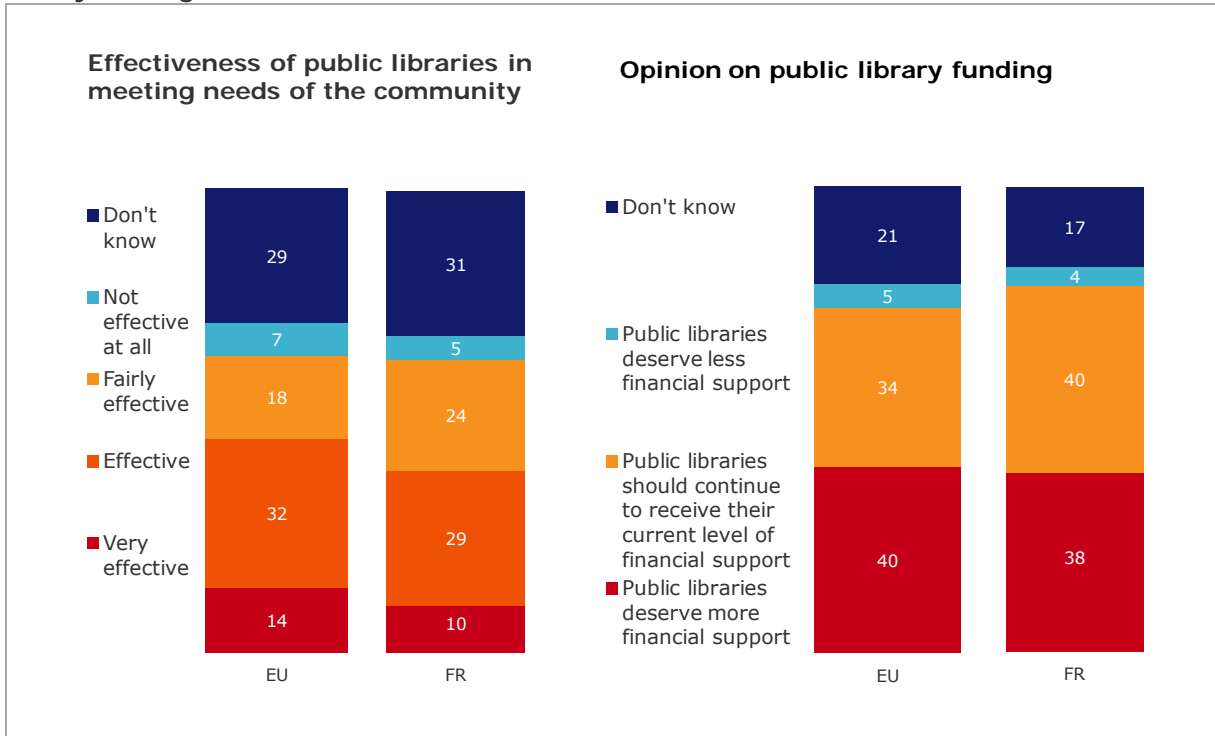
A little under two thirds (63%) of the general public in France (including both library users and non-users) felt libraries were either very effective, effective or fairly effective at meeting the needs of their local community. This was similar to the average across the 17 EU survey countries of 64%.

Library users were much more likely than non-users to think that libraries were effective in meeting the needs of their local community – 88% of all library users in France felt they were effective.

Almost two fifths (38%) of the public in France felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, similar to the average of all 17 EU countries (40%). Two fifths (40%) felt that funding should continue as at present, somewhat higher 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 4% of the public in France felt that public libraries deserve *less* financial support, broadly in line with the EU average (5%).

Library users were somewhat more likely than non-users to say that libraries deserve more financial support – 46% of library 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



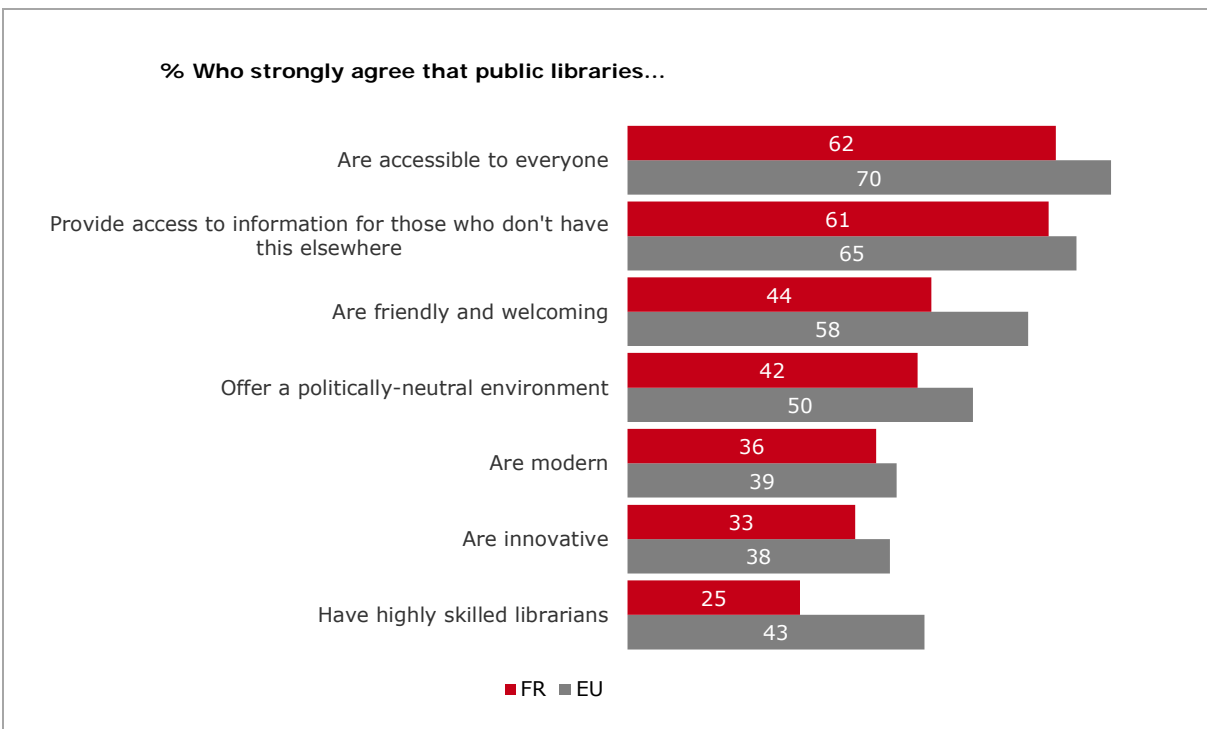
Source: Omnibus survey- Q6 How effective do you think your local public library is at meeting the needs of your community? & Q7 Which of the following statements represents most closely your opinion regarding the current funding for public libraries?

Base: All adults - France (1006); 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 France and EU who strongly agreed with each of these statements. Library users in France, compared with users across the EU, were less likely to strongly agree with each of the statements with the most notable differences being on the perceptions that libraries 'Have highly skilled librarians' (25% versus 43%), 'Are friendly and welcoming' (44% versus 58%), 'Are accessible to everyone' (62% versus 70%) and 'Offer a politically-neutral environment' (42% versus 50%).

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. France (1330); EU (24253)

5. Informal and non-formal learning

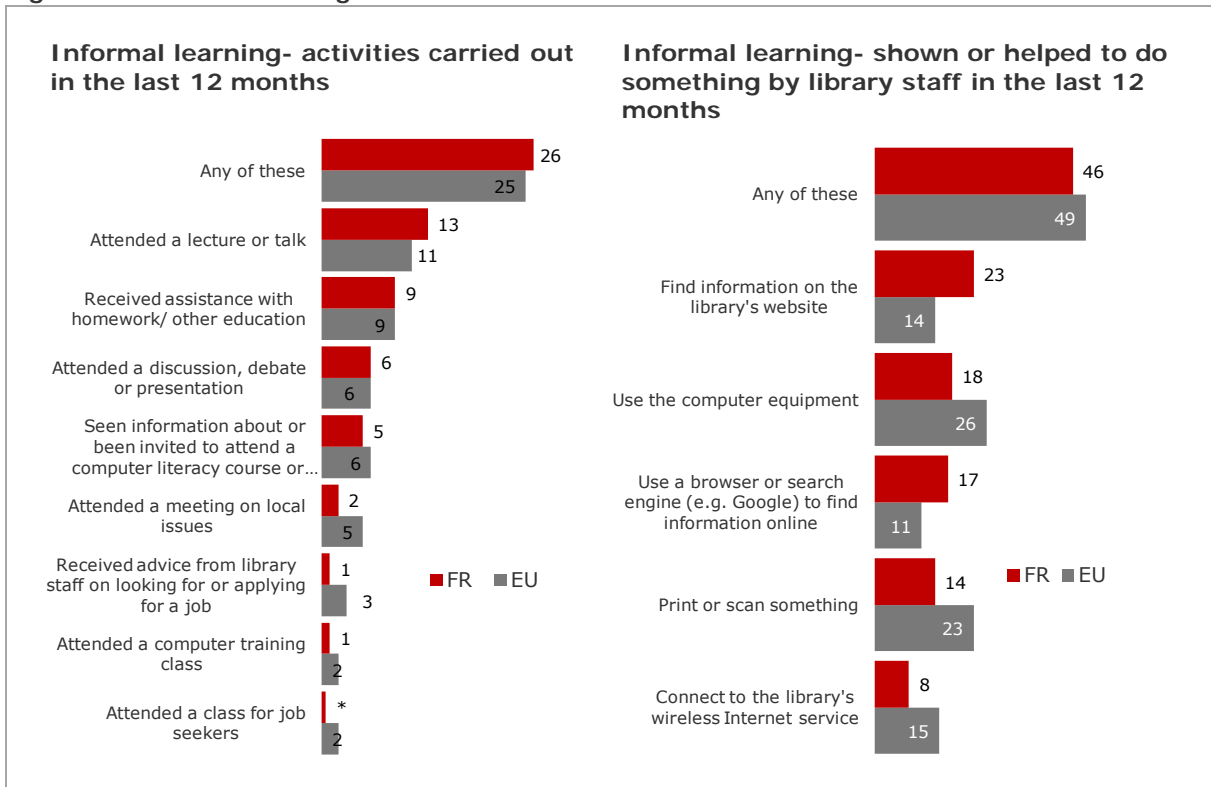
Public libraries are key players in the delivery of the non-formal/informal component of the European Commission’s lifelong learning policy, particularly with regard to *inclusive* delivery. The role of libraries in providing education to users was explored through asking all library users whether or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

Overall, in France around a quarter of all users (26%) had taken part in one of the educational activities in libraries asked about in the last 12 months, in line with the EU average of 25%.

In four of the educational activities asked about – attending a lecture or talk, attending a discussion/debate/presentation, receiving assistance with homework or other education and seeing information about or being invited to attend a computer literacy course – engagement levels among library users in France were broadly in line with those for the 17 EU countries as a whole. For the other educational activities, engagement levels in France were lower than for the EU as a whole (Figure 9) – for example, receiving advice from library staff on looking for/applying for a job (1% vs. EU average of 3%)

In terms of computer training, c.120,000 adults in France 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 - France (1496); EU (24253). C17- All PAC users - France (602); EU (11716).

As Figure 9 shows, public library staff play a role in assisting library users in informal learning. Overall, just under a half (46%) of library users in France had been shown or helped to do something by a member of library staff within the last 12 months, compared with the EU average of 49%.

The most common way in which library staff assisted library users in France was in helping them find information on the library's website, followed by assistance with using the computer equipment and help with using a browser/search engine to find information.

In the qualitative research, both staff and users agreed that the library's role was to provide support, assistance and encouragement for ICT users, without providing education that would lead to a qualification. The most frequently used and informal form of support provided was the effort made by libraries to make their staff increasingly available to ICT users, for example by locating staff offices near to the computer terminals.

"The requests are simple but they never stop, we've put our offices next to the computers, like that we're more easily available, we can help with web searches or using a memory stick..." (Library Manager, Semi-rural, France)

Assistance sessions were sometimes organised during which users could ask questions and get help. For example in one library, a multimedia workshop was held every day from 5pm to 6pm. Other workshops

included “initiation workshops” aimed at presenting the basic principles of using ICT, considered particularly useful for senior citizens and the young. “Creation sessions” for specific software/tools or the arrangement of activities such as games were organised in the better-equipped libraries, although this was rare.

Users were generally satisfied with the services provided by their libraries. They judged them to be very useful and often essential in their daily lives, as well as being a source of pleasure and entertainment. However, users were not always aware of the full extent of services on offer. For example, many were not aware of digital archives, e-books and workshops that might be of interest to them.

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 under a quarter (23%) of PAC users in France had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, somewhat lower than the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 155,000 PAC users in France who had used PAC for employment related activity.

Overall, 8% of PAC users in France had used a PAC to apply for a job (either in France or in another EU country) in the last 12 months - this represents approximately 52,500 adults in France. Of those respondents who applied for a job through PAC, 24% said that they were successful. This means that in all 2% of PAC users in France – or an estimated 12,000 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. However, only a small minority (3%) of PAC users in France indicated that they had been shown or helped to do some employment-related PAC activity (much lower than the EU average of 11%). The most common way in which library staff assisted library users in France was in helping them to write a CV (2% 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		
%	FR	EU	%	FR	EU
Any listed below	23	30	Any listed below	3	11
Find information about searching and/or applying for jobs	6	14	Improve skills needed in your current job	1	4
Search for jobs	11	13	How to write a CV	2	5
Write a CV or covering letter	10	12	How to develop skills needed to obtain a job	1	2
Improve skills needed in your current job	5	11	How to look for a job online (such as finding a recruitment company, searching for information about an employer)	1	3
Apply for jobs in this country	7	10	How to apply for a job online	1	2
Search for information about an employer	8	8	How to look for and apply for jobs in other EU countries	*	1
Find a recruitment company	4	5			
Use spread sheet/data	2	3			
Search for jobs in other EU countries	2	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. France (602); EU (11716).

PAC users were asked whether they had used PACs for a range of business-related activities in the last 3 months. A small minority (4%) of PAC users had used a PAC for participating in professional networks (compared with the EU average of 6%). More than one in three (36%) had used a PAC for finding information related to a business they worked in, above the EU average of 20%, and a small minority (4%) 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 library support for employment included the provision of dedicated spaces for IT work (such as computers, printers and scanners), and spaces dedicated to looking for jobs with staff, producing a CV or carrying out guided job searches. The level of support varied according to the skills and means available in the libraries. In the best cases, there was a dedicated space for job seekers with appropriate documents and specific software such as software for producing a CV. This form of support often remained informal. In smaller libraries however, on some occasions staff refused to give any advice or help with drawing up a CV, as they considered that they did not have the right skills.

Further benefits of library ICT skills for those seeking employment included the serene library environment that was favourable to job-seeking activities; assistance from staff; social interaction that helped job-seekers avoid social isolation, and access to large resources.

“We’ve set up a kiosk space essentially dedicated to employment, the computers are there for that reason and there’s always an agent there to help people (Senior Library Manager, Urban, France)

“People are happy when they go away with a nice CV” (Senior Library Manager, Urban, France)

Library staff stressed that they did not want themselves to be seen as replacements for the Job Centre however, which in fact often sent people to libraries when they were overworked.

With regards to business support there was no activity reported, and users had never questioned library staff about support in this area.

7. E-government and active citizenship

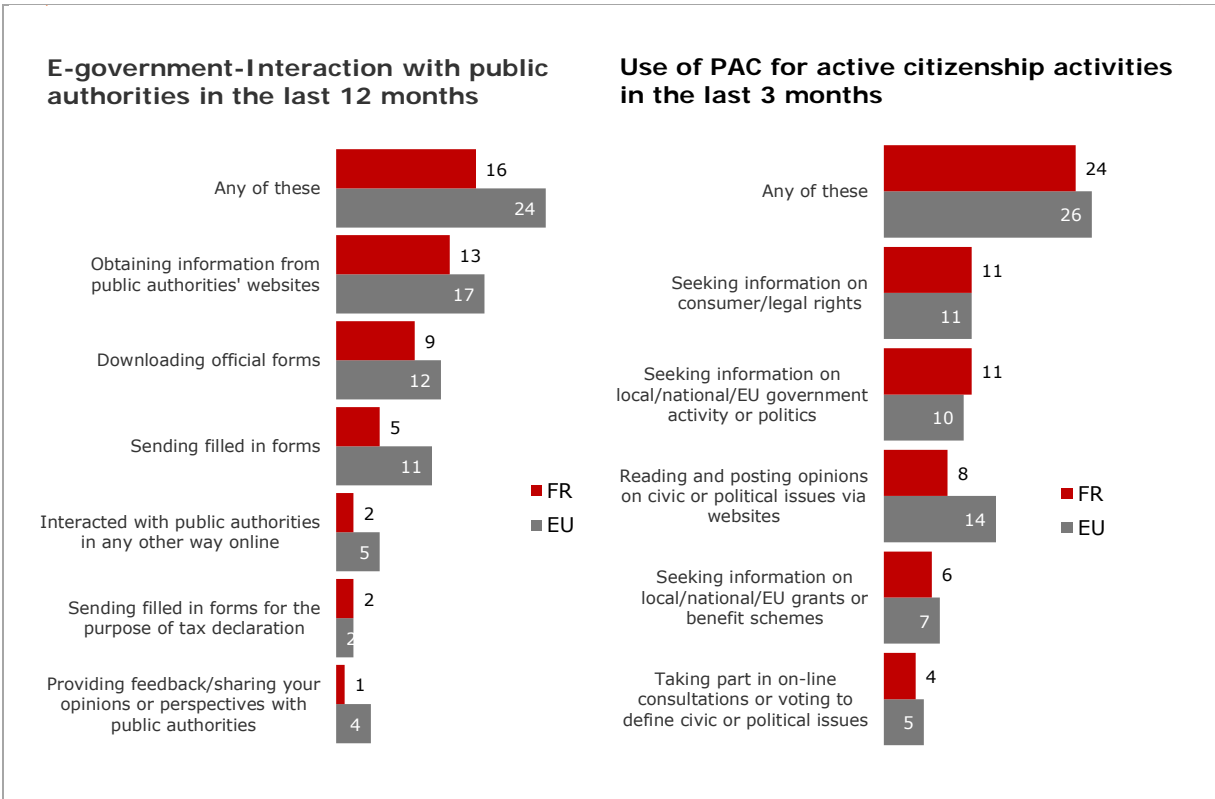
As part of the ‘Connecting Europe’ agenda, public libraries represent a network of public digital access points which can assist in the effective delivery of access to e-government. Computer users were asked about their interaction with public authorities using PACs, including obtaining information from 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 France is somewhat higher than the EU average. Nearly three fifths (57%) of adults in France had used the internet in the last 12 months to interact with public authorities, compared with 41% across the EU. Citizens in France were also somewhat more likely than the EU average to use the Internet to obtain information from public authorities’ web sites (45% compared with 35%).

The library survey found that around one in six PAC users in France (16%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, below the EU average (24%), and significantly lower than the Eurostat finding for all adults in France. The most common ways in which PAC users in France interacted with public authorities were to obtain information from public authorities’ websites (13%) and downloading official forms (9%). In each case, these figures were slightly lower than the proportions across the EU countries, but much lower than the Eurostat findings for all adults in France.

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, a quarter of PAC users in France (24%) had used PAC for engagement activities in the past 3 months, in line with the average for users across the 17 EU countries (26%). The two most common community engagement activities mentioned by users in France were seeking information on consumer/legal rights (11%) and seeking information on local/national/EU government activity or politics (11%), with both in line with EU averages.

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. France (602); EU (11716)

The qualitative research found that while no support in the area of e-government had been set-up librarians received occasional requests for assistance, especially for help with completing tax returns. These often came from people who were isolated or in difficulty. Active citizenship was not an area that respondents said they received queries in, and perceived it as more of a concern for local bodies.

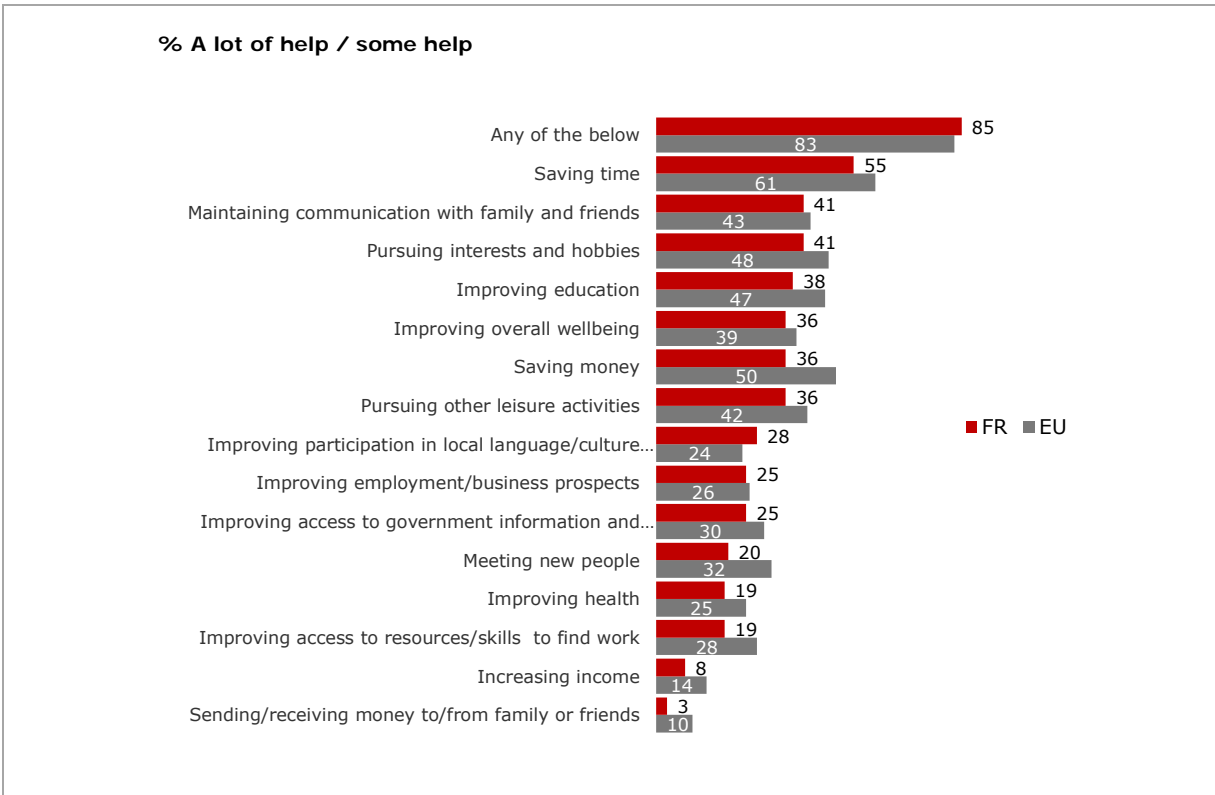
8. Impacts

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 more than eight in ten PAC users in France (85%) said that their PAC use had been helpful to them in at least one of the areas asked about, similar to the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 0.6 million people in France.

Figure 12 shows the proportions who said PAC use had been helpful in each area, within France 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- France (602); EU (11716).

As well as the general area of saving time (55% France, 61% EU), PAC use was rated as helpful across a range of leisure and social areas such as maintaining communication with family and friends (41% France, 43% EU), pursuing interests and hobbies (41% France, 48% EU) and pursuing other leisure activities (36% France, 42% EU). Over a third of PAC users (36%) in France said PAC was helpful in saving money, below the EU average (50%) and representing an estimated 250,000 PAC users in France.

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

- 265,000 people to improve their education
- 175,000 people to improve their employment or business prospects
- 130,000 people to improve their access to resources necessary to find work
- 55,000 people to increase their income
- 175,000 people to improve their access to government information services

In the qualitative research, users reported numerous benefits of using library ICT services, including greater independence in their use of ICT, self-confidence and ease of use, pleasure and entertainment and social interaction. Some users had never used a computer before their first experience with library ICT (particularly senior citizens) but were now capable of managing on their own with basic ICT use. Other users had previously been nervous about using the internet and now feel reassured. Example of positive experiences of using library ICT included:

- *Marielle*: had been frequenting the library for many years, she started to come when she became unemployed to learn about computing, look for a job and spend some time. She reworked her CV with the help of the staff and has gained more self-confidence. She has found a new job but still likes spending time in the library.
- *Faiza*: arrived in France 5 months ago to join her husband, she speaks bad French, is looking for work and feels quite isolated. For her, using ICT is very useful to guide her in what she needs to do, to learn French and meet people
- *Jean-Claude*: is retired and spends a lot of his time in the library. He consults the archives, goes onto the Internet, is learning Chinese for his personal pleasure and often takes part in workshops or other events organised by the library. Thanks to ICT, it is a lively, active environment.
- *Soué*: is a young worker writing a thesis. She comes to the library to work in a calm environment (she has a small flat and has two children) and uses office tools. She also makes the most of the Internet connexion to pursue her research.
- *Bernard*: is retired and had never used a computer before. Thanks to taking initiation workshops and being helped in basic uses, he has become independent and has now bought a computer.