

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

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 Portugal and compares the results to the EU total.

The public library landscape

- The desk research estimates that there are 510 public libraries in Portugal, which equates to 0.5 libraries per 10,000 population, significantly below the average of 1.3 libraries per 10,000 population across the EU.
- Internet access is currently available in around 93% of public libraries in Portugal.

Library and PAC usage

- An estimated 1 million adults in Portugal, around one in eight adults in the country (12%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 0.1 million adults in Portugal, 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 Portugal were more likely than the EU average to be men, live in a rural area, be aged 15-24 and still studying.
- It is clear that across the EU, and even more so in Portugal, the primary motivation of PAC users is the free nature of the service (50% Portugal, 33% EU), together with the lack of other options that people have. PAC users in Portugal, compared with users across the EU, were more likely to say they had no other options for accessing the internet (33% Portugal, 19% EU) or for accessing computers (26% Portugal, 19% EU).
- The value placed on the PAC service was higher among users in Portugal than the EU average. Overall, 99% of PAC users in Portugal said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users. Over half of PAC users in Portugal (57%) said the service was extremely valuable, significantly higher than the EU average (36%).
- Although satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users in Portugal, the level of satisfaction in Portugal was lower than the EU average. 88% of users in Portugal were satisfied, compared with 91% across the EU. Over a third in Portugal (37%) said they were very satisfied, compared with just under a half (47%) across the EU.

Perceptions and impacts of public libraries

- 'Free access to the Internet' and 'free access to computers', were both rated important by 96% of users, compared with around seven out of ten library users across Europe.
- Just over half (54%) of the general public in Portugal (including both library users and non-users) felt libraries were either very effective, effective or fairly effective at meeting the needs of their local community. This was lower than the average across the EU of 64%.
- A quarter (26%) of the public in Portugal felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, which was lower than the EU average (40%).
- Overall 99% of PAC users in Portugal said their PAC use had delivered at least one impact for them, higher than the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 0.1 million people in Portugal.
- Library users in Portugal were less likely than the EU average to strongly agree that libraries: 'Provide access to information for those who don't have it elsewhere' (45% Portugal compared with 65% EU), 'Have highly skilled librarians' (30% Portugal compared with 43% EU), 'Are innovative' (27% Portugal, 38% EU) and 'Are accessible to everyone' (59% Portugal, 70% EU).

Informal and non-formal learning

- In Portugal 27% 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 below a third (29%) of PAC users in Portugal had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, on par with the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 43,000 PAC users in Portugal who had used PAC for employment related activity.
- An estimated 20,000 PAC users in Portugal had used a PAC to apply for a job in the last 12 months, and an estimated 4,000 adults were successful in securing employment by this means.

E-government and active citizenship

- A quarter of PAC users in Portugal (25%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, on par with the EU average of one in four (24%). The most common ways in which PAC users in Portugal interacted with public authorities were to send filled in forms (18%, compared with 11% across the EU) and to obtain information from public authorities' websites (15% compared with 17% across the EU).
- Overall, just over a third of PAC users in Portugal (35%) had used PAC for engagement activities in the past 3 months, higher than the average for users across the EU (26%). The two most common community engagement activities were reading and posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (22% Portugal compared with 14% EU) and seeking information on consumer/legal rights (14% Portugal, broadly similar to the EU level of 11%).

1. Background and methodology

1.1 Context for the research

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

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

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

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

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 1,261 members of the public aged 15+ in Portugal (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 Portugal, 700 interviews were conducted with people who had not used Public Access Computers (PACs) in libraries (12,537 across the 17 countries) and 700 with those who had (11,716 across the 17 countries). The interviews in Portugal were conducted in 25 libraries which were selected and contacted with help from a representative of the General Directorate for Book, Archives and Libraries (DGLAB)/Secretary of State for Culture. Respondents were interviewed face-to-face.
- Qualitative fieldwork was conducted, consisting in each country of five 60-minute depth interviews with library managers and four 90-minute group discussions with PAC users. At least 3 libraries were represented in each country, in both urban and semi-rural locations.

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

1.4 This report

This report provides a brief overview of the results for Portugal 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 Portugal 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 Portugal are included in the EU average, which has the effect of lessening the statistical power of comparisons between the Portugal 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 Portugal and are presented in terms of estimated numbers.

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)

2. The public library landscape and internet provision

There are 510 public libraries in Portugal (as of October 2012),⁶ which equates to 0.5 libraries per 10,000 population, compared with an average across the 17 EU countries of 1.3 libraries per 10,000 population. The figure of 510 libraries is based on figures from the General Directorate for Books, Archives and Libraries, and includes central libraries and branch libraries. The General Directorate is responsible for the 'National Public Libraries Network Plan', introduced by the Secretary of State for Culture in 1987.

The plan consisted essentially in the establishment and operation of a net of Municipal Libraries (*Rede Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas or RNBP*) comprising central libraries located at the Municipality's headquarters and branch libraries in different areas, according to the number and distribution of the population.

Public funds allocated to this program are estimated to have reached 209 million Euros. The central Government funded up to 50% of the total investment in the libraries, which were built and equipped by the municipalities. Of the 308 Portuguese municipalities, 194 have a central public library that is part of the RNBP. Within these 194 municipalities there are 168 branch libraries and 49 mobile libraries.

These 510 libraries break down as:

- 194 RNBP central libraries
- 168 RNBP branch libraries
- 105 non RNBP central libraries
- 43 non RNBP branch libraries

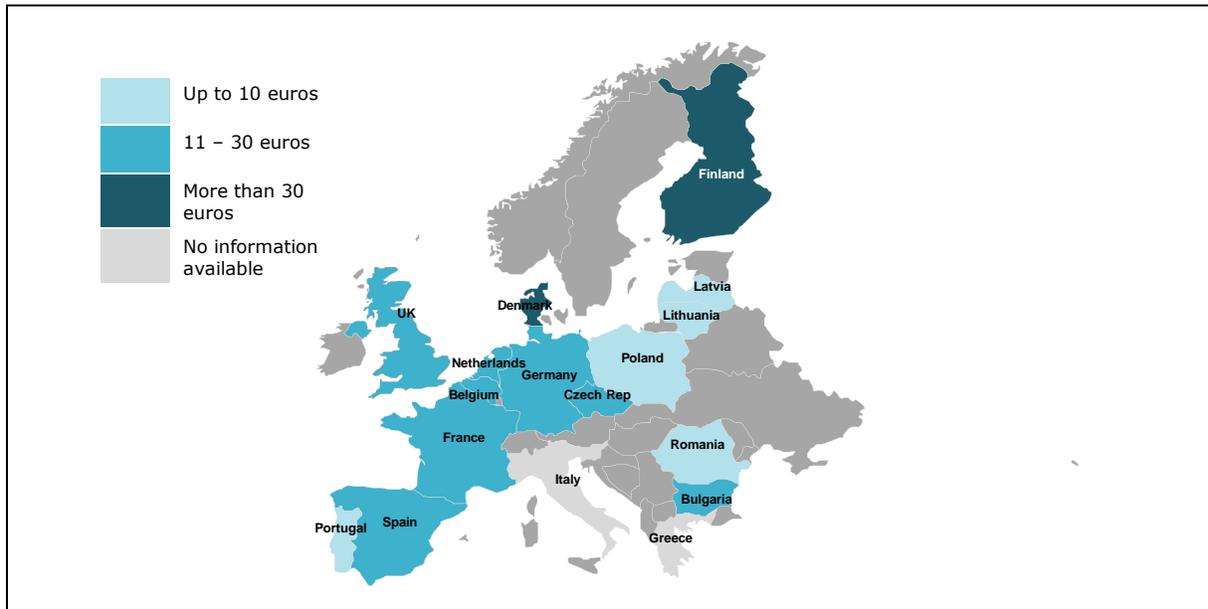
RNBP public libraries spend an average of 215,000 € each in 2011, the total expenses of the 194 central libraries being estimated to reach 42 million Euros. Staff expenses represent 77% of the total expenses. According to the General Directorate survey, in 2011 libraries expenses reached 5.5 Euros per capita. Public libraries are almost exclusively financed by public funds. The substantial cuts in the national budget are bound to have an important impact on the public libraries system, which is one of the sectors most affected by the current austerity policy lead by the government.

In terms of ICT on offer, the Portuguese municipal libraries are rather well equipped in this sector compared to its European counterparts. More than 90% of public libraries have computers connected to the Internet, while Wi-Fi is available in more than 60% of them.

Annual public spending on libraries per capita in Portugal at 5.5 Euros was very low compared to other EU countries, as shown in the following map:

⁶ Source: The General Directorate for Books, Archives and Libraries Statistical Report

Figure 1: Annual spending on libraries per capita



Source: TNS desk research

Eurostat data (2011) for Internet access at home shows that in Portugal 58% of households have access to the Internet, significantly lower than the EU average of 73%. It may therefore be expected that demand for and usage of PAC services would be higher in Portugal than in some other countries.

3. Library and PAC usage

3.1 Access to libraries and PACs

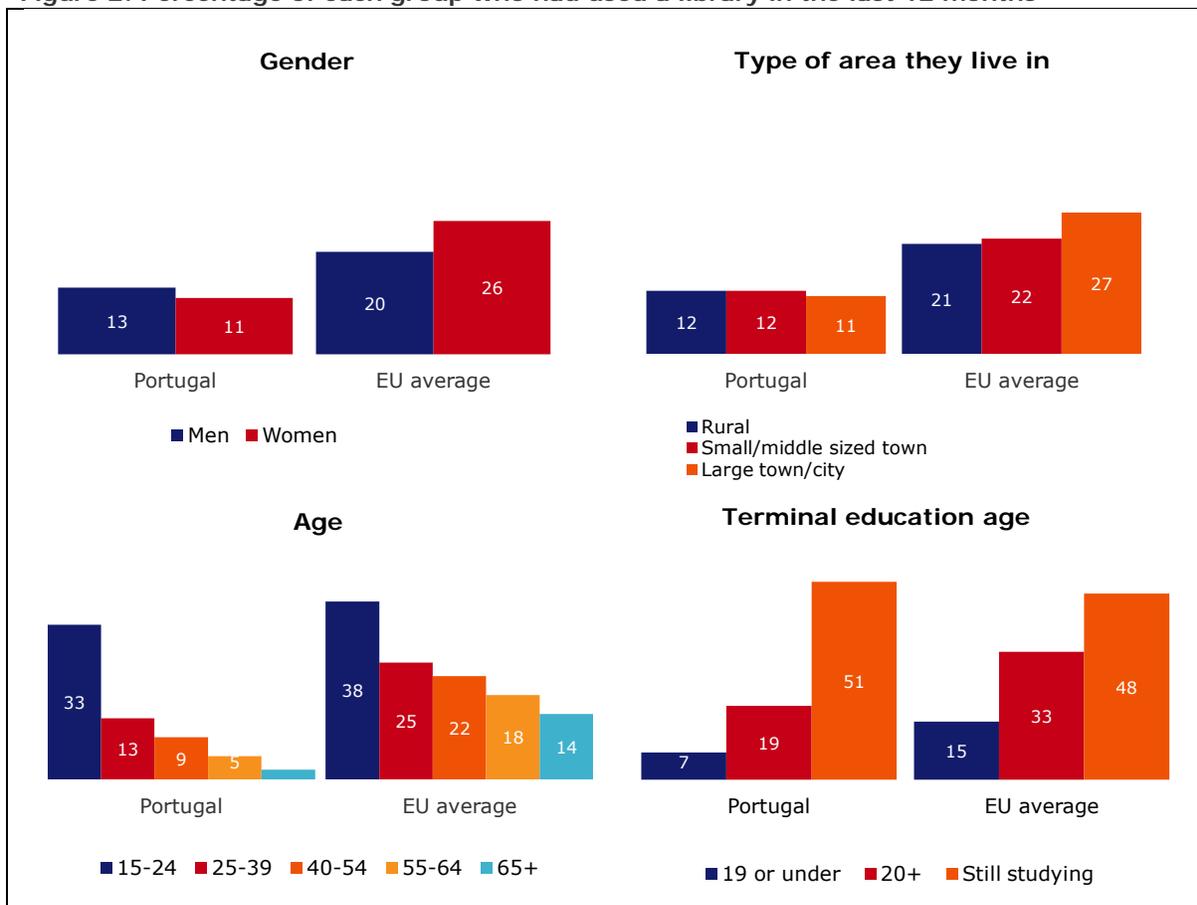
The general public survey found that library usage in Portugal was below the EU average:

- An estimated 1 million adults in Portugal, around one in eight adults in the country (12%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 0.5 million adults, equating to 6% of all adults in Portugal, had used a library at least once a month, much lower than the EU average of 14%.

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

- Women (11%) were less likely than men (13%) to have visited a library, in contrast with the findings across the EU.
- Library usage in Portugal was highest among those aged 15-24 (33%), declining rapidly to 13% among 25-39 year olds and steadily decreasing with age to 2% among those aged 65+. Library usage in Portugal was lower than the EU average across all age groups.
- Library use was broadly similar in large towns and cities (11%), smaller towns (12%) and rural areas (12%) with figures for Portugal all below the EU averages.
- Library use was higher among those who were still studying – 51% of this group had used a public library in the last 12 months, above the EU average.

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



Source: Omnibus survey – Q1. Have you visited a public library in the last 12 months?
 Base: PT – All adults (1261), Men (607), Women (654), 15-24 (192), 25-39 (337), 40-54 (364), 55-64 (164), 65+ (204), Large town/city (304), Small town (497), Rural area (457), Finished education 19 or under (920), 20 or over (151), Still studying (95), 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 Portugal, compared with across the EU, was:

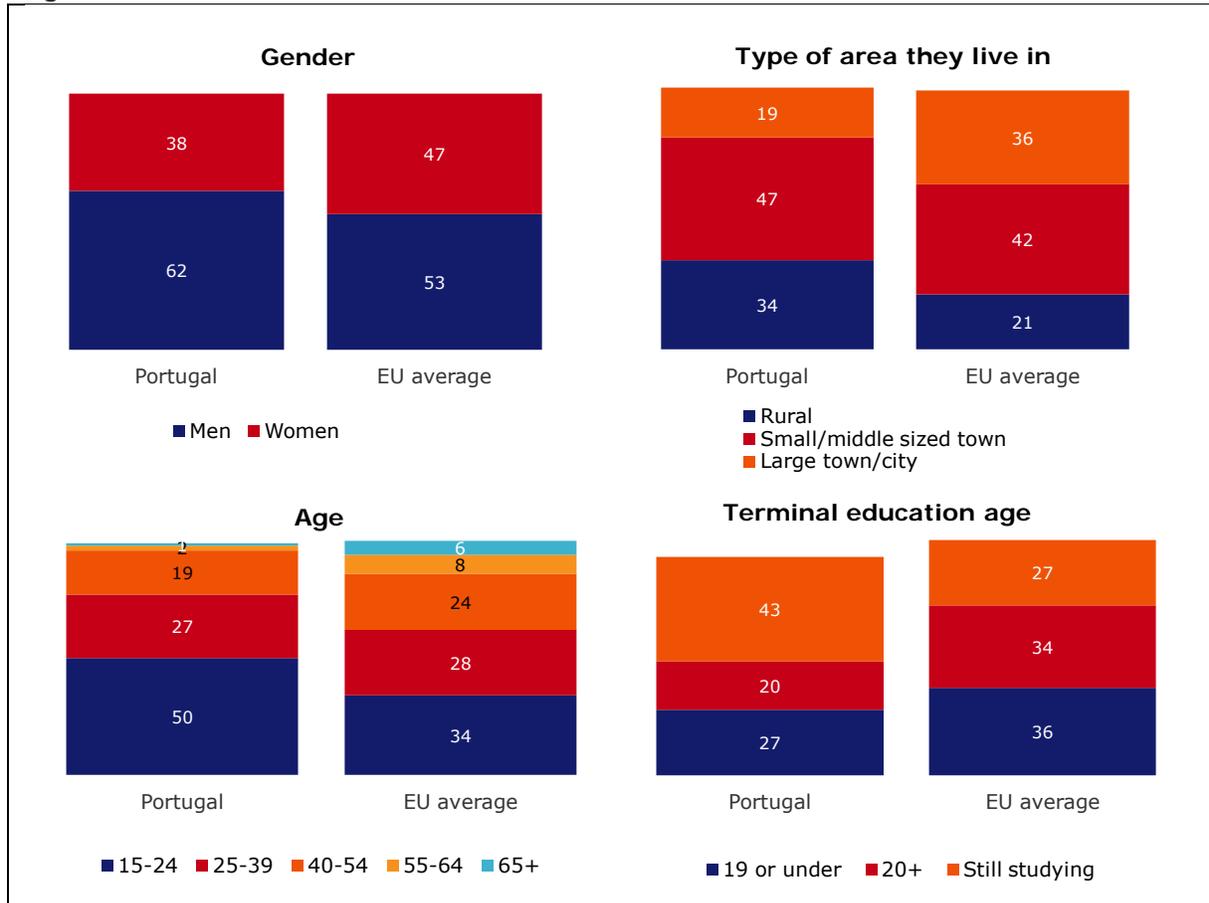
- 53% of library users in Portugal were men and 47% women, against the EU average, where library users were more likely to be women (58%) than men (42%);
- Users in Portugal had a younger age profile compared with the EU average – 43% were aged 15-24, 28% aged 25-39, 20% aged 40-54, 5% aged 55-64 and 4% 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 eight (14%) of those who had visited a library in Portugal in the last 12 months had used a PAC, the same as the EU average. When those who had not used a PAC were asked why this was, although the majority (73%) said they had no need to because they had a computer/internet at home, a small minority of 4% 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 Portugal had used PACs in the last 12 months, significantly lower than the average of 4% of adults across the EU countries. This is estimated to be around 0.1 million adults in Portugal.

PAC users in Portugal were more likely than the EU average to be men and to be aged 15-24; they were much more likely than the EU average to live in a rural area, and more likely to still be studying, 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 PT (700), EU (11716).

Over one in five PAC users in Portugal (23%) made use of PACs at least once a week, the same as the proportion across the EU (23%), with 31% doing so once to three times a month (compared with the EU average of 29%). 46% of users in Portugal had used PACs once every three months or less often, similar to the EU average of 47%.

In the qualitative research, library managers used a variety of means to promote and encourage the local community to benefit from library ICT services. Library managers had adopted communication plans for users and non-users, particularly urban libraries with less than 200,000 users per annum and libraries in semi-rural areas. This communication was mainly through email, social networks, brochures, flyers, users' guides and newsletters. Word of mouth was also an important way to reach potential users of ICT services in the library. Library managers also identified training in ICT as an effective tool to encourage people to use ICT services in the library.

Older users were not perceived as a difficult group to reach as they had a great interest in learning to use new technologies. Consequently library staff felt this group could be easily reached through ICT training, such as introductory courses to computer and internet usage, and general support. Interest in such courses was reportedly so great that there was a significant waiting list.

"The waiting list (regarding computer training for seniors) is of two years!" (Senior library manager, Urban, Portugal)

Efforts had been made to reach people with disabilities by providing specific ICT equipment, such as hardware and software suited to people who were blind, coupled with more personalised support from staff to help this group use the equipment. Urban libraries were most likely to provide this support as other libraries did not seem to have users with disabilities that justified investment in this area.

People on low incomes were thought to be motivated to use library ICT services because they were free, and immigrants and homeless people used the services to contact family and friends. The library staff thought they were able to provide a friendly, welcoming environment for these groups.

"We had a lot of immigrants and a lot of homeless people, who used the email and the audio material. They (immigrants) use the services to establish contact with their family and friends but also to have a friendly place in a country that is strange to them" (Library Manager, Urban, Portugal)

"The arrumadores [socially excluded people who help park cars for money] were integrated in a project from the city hall and they came in groups. From a group of 20, 2 or 3 stayed and they started to come alone, making requests, using the computer, seeing films, and even became autonomous." (Library Manager, Urban, Portugal)

Unemployed groups had also been easy to engage and had proactively asked library staff for support in activities related to job searches. In some urban libraries there was some training tailored to unemployed people's needs which had a positive response.

"There are more unemployed people now...we are trying to have some courses for them next year... They came here to do curriculum vitae and send emails to respond to job offers. For instance I have helped to fill out forms of the employment centre." (Library Manager, Urban, Portugal)

There was a lack of initiatives to engage ethnic minorities (including Roma) in the libraries however. In some libraries the local minority population was perceived as small and in other areas where there was a significant minority population, use of library ICT services by the minorities was reportedly rare.

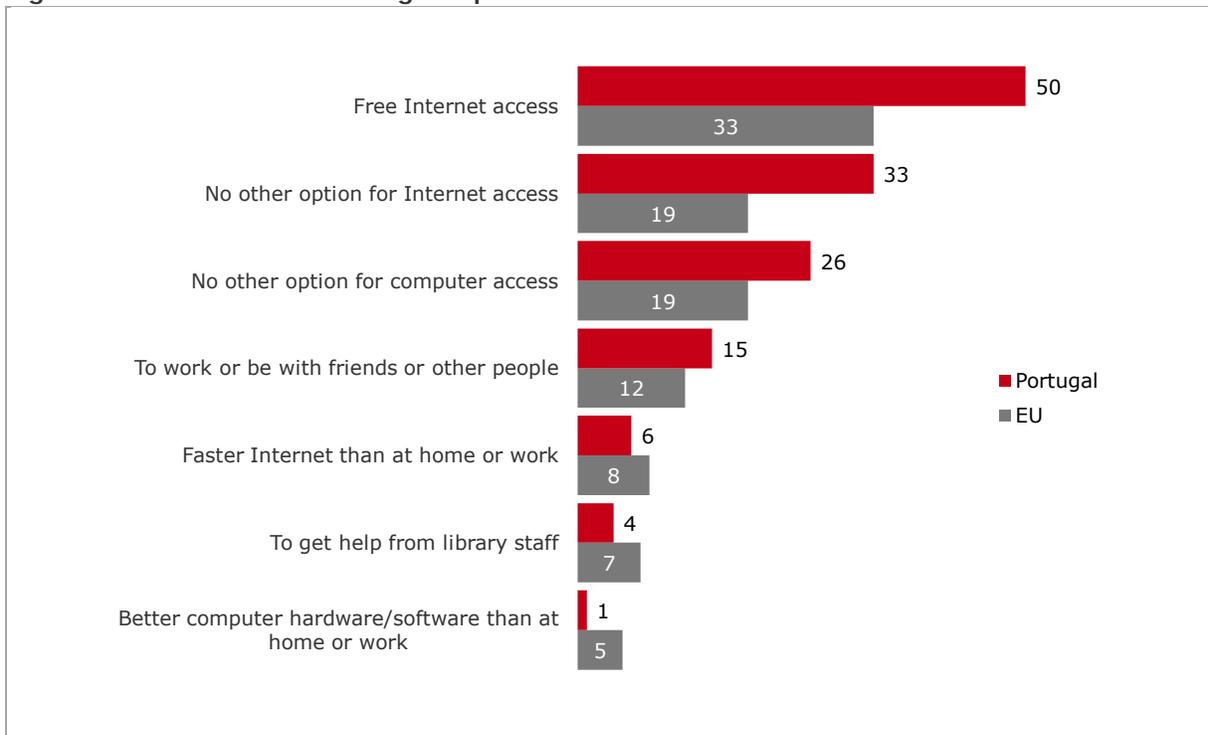
Motivations for using library ICT services varied between user groups. Generally, retired people, regardless of their income and whether they had ICT at home, used library ICT services in order to use the library staff's advice and support as they lacked the skills and confidence to use it on their own. People with middle or low income, unemployed people and students tended to use ICT services at the library because they did not have the internet or even a computer at home. In the case of students, they also found the library a more peaceful place to focus on their studies. Other advantages of using the ICT services at the library as identified by users included the variety of other services provided, such as newspapers and books; the free access to ICT services, and the calm and peaceful environment of a library compared to, for example, an internet café. Further, libraries were often situated in close

proximity to users' homes and in a central location. Secondly, users referred to the fact that the library was open to all type of people without exclusion, that support was offered by library staff when researching information, and some software was available in libraries that was not accessible in other spaces.

3.2 Reasons for using PACs

PAC users interviewed in the in-library survey were asked what their main reasons were for using computers, the internet and software in public libraries within the last 12 months. It is clear that in Portugal and across the EU, the primary motivation for PAC users is the free nature of the service. The lack of other options for accessing either computers or the internet (26% and 33% respectively) were more likely to be mentioned by PAC users in Portugal than across the EU (19% for both). PAC users in Portugal, compared with users across the 17 EU countries, were also more likely to mention working with friends or other people (15% in Portugal compared with 12% across the EU) and were less likely to mention better hardware/software than at home or work (1% in Portugal vs. 5% across the EU.)

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- PT (700); 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 Portugal, 9% of PAC users said that they had no other options for accessing the internet (compared with 11% across the EU), and a further 5% said that there was no other source of free internet for them (compared with 14% across the EU). Overall, it is estimated that 21,000 PAC users in Portugal (14% of PAC users) had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.

Those who indicated that they had no other options for accessing the internet tended to come from 'digitally excluded' (and often 'socially excluded') groups, which clearly highlights the role of PACs in the future of the EU's 2020 Growth Strategy. Specifically, the following groups were particularly likely to indicate that they did not have any other options:

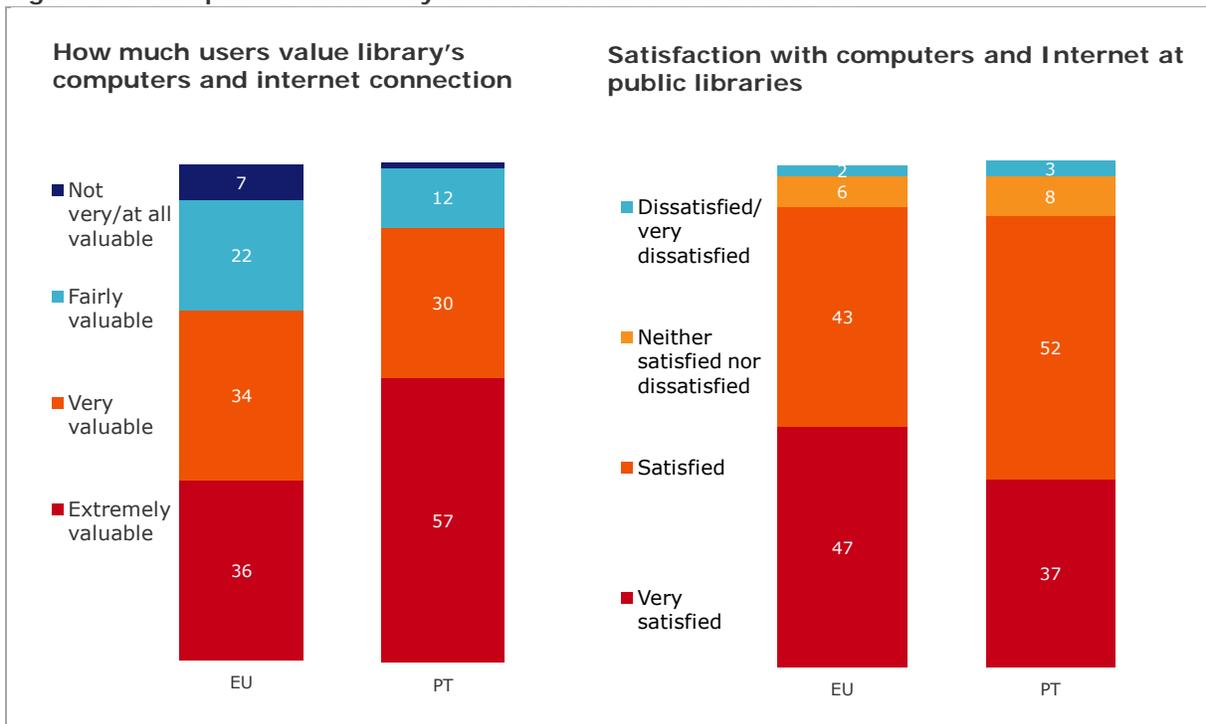
- Older people – 28% of PAC users aged 65+ had no alternative internet access, compared with 4% of those aged 15-24
- Those who finished their studies aged 15 or under- 33% of this group compared with 3% of those who finished their education over the age of 20

The value placed on the PAC service was higher among users in Portugal than the EU average, as shown in Figure 5. Overall, 99% of PAC users in Portugal said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, compared with 92% of all EU PAC users. Over half of PAC users in Portugal (57%) said the service was extremely valuable, significantly higher than the EU average (36%).

The library's computers and internet connection were valued particularly highly in Portugal by users aged 15-24 and 25-39 (62% of both groups rated the services as extremely valuable), and those living in rural areas (63% 'extremely valuable').

Satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users, as shown in Figure 5: 88% of users in Portugal were satisfied. Users in Portugal were less likely to say they were satisfied with computers and internet at the library than users in the 17 EU countries as a whole; 37% said they were very satisfied, compared with just under a half (47%) across the EU.

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



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

Base: All PAC users. PT (700); EU (11716)

In Portugal, around four in five PAC users (79%) said that when they go to a library to use a computer they find a free computer straight away, slightly above the EU average (72%). A further nine per cent said that they have to wait for no more than 10 minutes compared with 16% across the EU.

In the qualitative research, the number of computers available exclusively to users varied by type of library, with urban libraries having between 18 and 36 computers available and libraries in semi-rural areas having 10 computers. Use of the library computers was generally free of charge, although one library offered free use for one hour only and after that it was charged.

In addition to computers libraries offered hardware such as printers, photocopiers, scanners, CDs and DVDs. Some urban libraries had specific hardware for blind and partially sighted users. None of the libraries in the sample had webcams.

The software provided included Microsoft Office, software to access the online catalogue, CD's with different software, and in some urban libraries software for the blind and partially sighted and for illiterate users which converted text in to audio format.

The general view of library managers was that their library's hardware and software was not up to date and in some cases even obsolete. Some computers were perceived as slow and unreliable. Similarly, the version of software was usually outdated because there were not sufficient funds to continually update software and hardware.

"Our computers aren't outdated, they are ancient...which leads to a slow internet access and even when printing...There were people who came here to work with Office and couldn't work because the computers were too slow." (Library manager, Urban, Portugal)

The majority of libraries in this sample provided broadband internet free of charge and one of the libraries had optic fibre. Internet connection was unanimously described as fast and reliable, and only one library in the sample did not provide free Wifi to users.

Similar to library managers, users held the view that hardware was outdated which caused delays in carrying out tasks. This was a more common view among users with better digital skills who were carrying out more complex tasks. In one specific library in an urban area, users did not perceive there to be enough computers available to meet user demand.

"I think that one of the bigger problems is the computers... it really is a Jurassic park" (User, Female, 40-64 years old, Portugal).

"I have spent more time closing the computer than actually using it, it's completely impossible. One person reads one thing in two minutes but takes five or six minutes waiting to open a website. I give up!" (User, Female, 25-39 years old, Portugal)

According to the users and library managers, the time period for using the computers was limited to one hour. According to the users, this was too short a period of time and not long enough to perform certain tasks such as school work. However, it seems that in cases where there was no other person that wanted to use the computers, library staff allowed individuals to use computers for a longer period of time.

The impact of this time limitation was accentuated by the lack of efficiency of some equipment. As computers froze from time to time and took a long time do a task like opening a document or an

application, the time that each user had to carry out a task on the computer was further reduced. This situation could be overcome, according to the users interviewed, by updating the hardware and increasing the number of computers so that users could have a more extended period of time for using the computers.

“One hour is not good enough, when we are starting to write the conclusion time is up. So we decide to go to a cyber-coffee and we use the computer and divided the cost between us.” (Recent first time user, Male, 16-24 years old, Portugal)

“The ideal was to have more computers so we can have more time to use the computer. Because sometimes I’m anxious because there are people waiting for me to leave the computer” (User, Female, 40-64 years old, Portugal)

Users perceived the available software to be basic, such as Microsoft Office and Internet Explorer. In urban areas Microsoft Messenger and specific software for blind and visual impaired users was also identified by users. In general, software was considered outdated, particularly by employed users but also by unemployed users with a medium or high level of education and by students.

“This program (specific for blind users) that they have here is completely outdated. The version that they have is the 6.0 and the current version is the 13.” (Recent first time user, Male, 16-24 years old)

However, users admitted that the existing software, in particular Microsoft Office, allowed them to perform the more common tasks such as schoolwork or work projects.

There were some concerns among users that internet security was not sufficient, which would compromise data security when carrying out tasks online such as filling out administrative forms or downloading documents.

“I don’t think that it is reliable. There are things that I do not open because I know that some virus may enter” (User, Female, 25-39 years old, Portugal)

Internet speed was generally considered to be sufficient by users and library staff, with the exception of one library in a semi-rural location where users felt the connection speed was too slow to allow them to download documents.

4. Impressions of public libraries

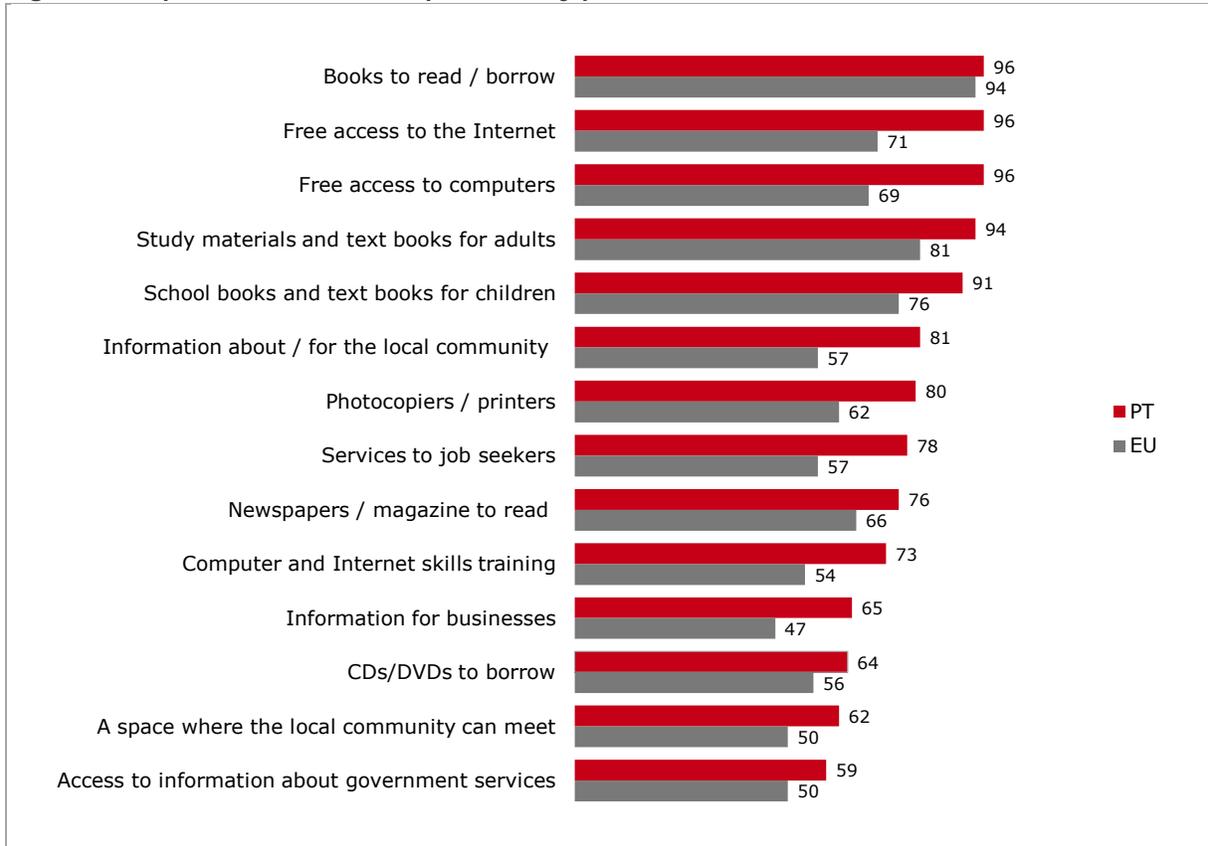
4.1 Importance of library services

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

Users in Portugal were generally more likely than the EU average to rate the individual services provided by public libraries as important, although the relative importance they attached to the services was broadly similar to that across the 17 EU countries. Not surprisingly, the core service of ‘books to read/borrow’ was considered the most important, rated as important by 96% of users in Portugal (and 94% across the EU), followed by ‘free access to the Internet’ and ‘free access to computers’, both rated important by 96% of users. Educational services were also rated highly; study materials and text books

for adults and school books and text books for children were rated important by nine out of ten users in Portugal. Just over seven in ten library users in Portugal (73%) rated the provision of 'computer and Internet skills training' as an important service, much higher than the EU average of 54%.

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 - PT (1400); EU (24253)

The qualitative research found that users viewed the library environment very positively, and described it as calm, pleasant and professional, and suitable for working in. In the semi-rural area the library was described as a place that conveys culture, knowledge and diversity.

"It is very pleasant. It has the landscape that is really nice" (User, Female, 25-39 years old, Portugal)

"I live during the week in a very agitated environment. I really need this. This silence is precious" (User, Female, 40-64 years old, Portugal)

"I think the library has a great work environment, there are people working and I think that motivates study" (User, Female, 25-39 years old, Portugal)

4.2 Effectiveness and funding of public libraries

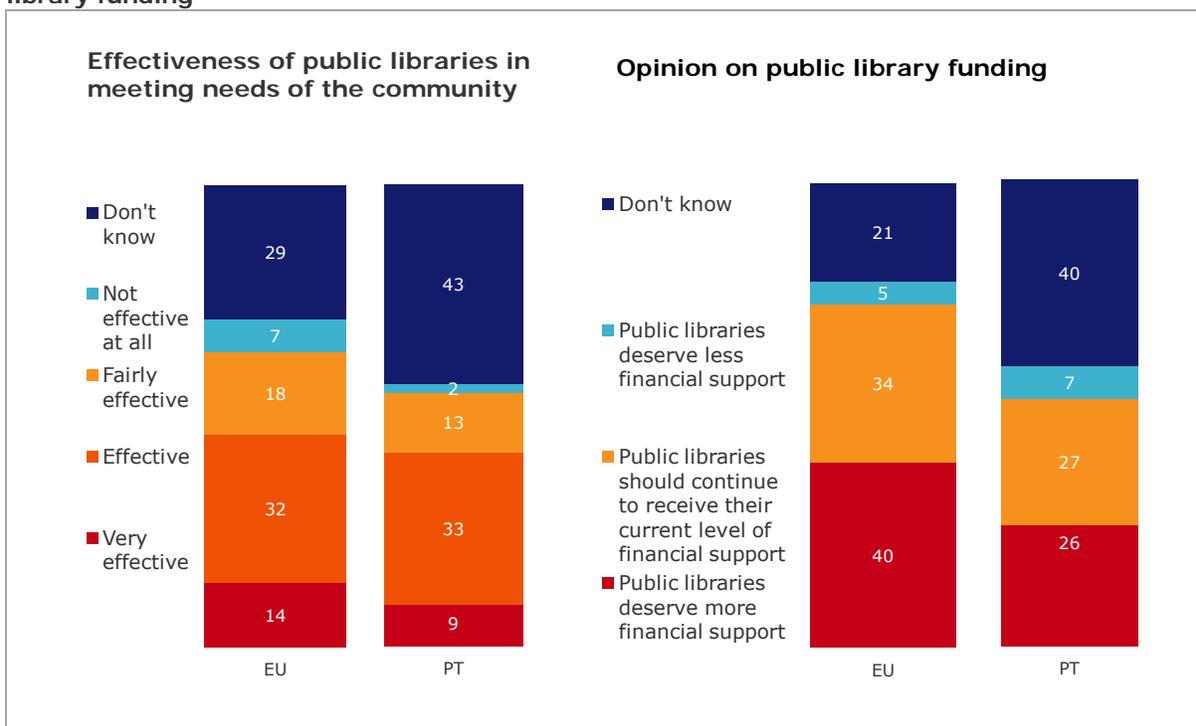
Just over half (54%) of the general public in Portugal (including both library users and non-users) felt libraries were either very effective, effective or fairly effective at meeting the needs of their local community. This was lower than the average across the 17 EU survey countries of 64%.

Library users in Portugal were almost unanimous and PAC users were unanimous in their opinion that libraries were effective in meeting the needs of their local community – 91% of all library users felt they were effective, rising to 100% among PAC users.

A quarter (26%) of the public in Portugal felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, which was significantly lower than the average of all 17 EU countries (40%). A large proportion (40%) did not express an opinion and around a quarter (27%) felt that the funding should continue as at present. Only 7% of the public in Portugal felt that public libraries deserve *less* financial support.

Not surprisingly, library users and PAC users were much more likely than non-users to say that libraries deserve more financial support – 49% of all library users, and 76% 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



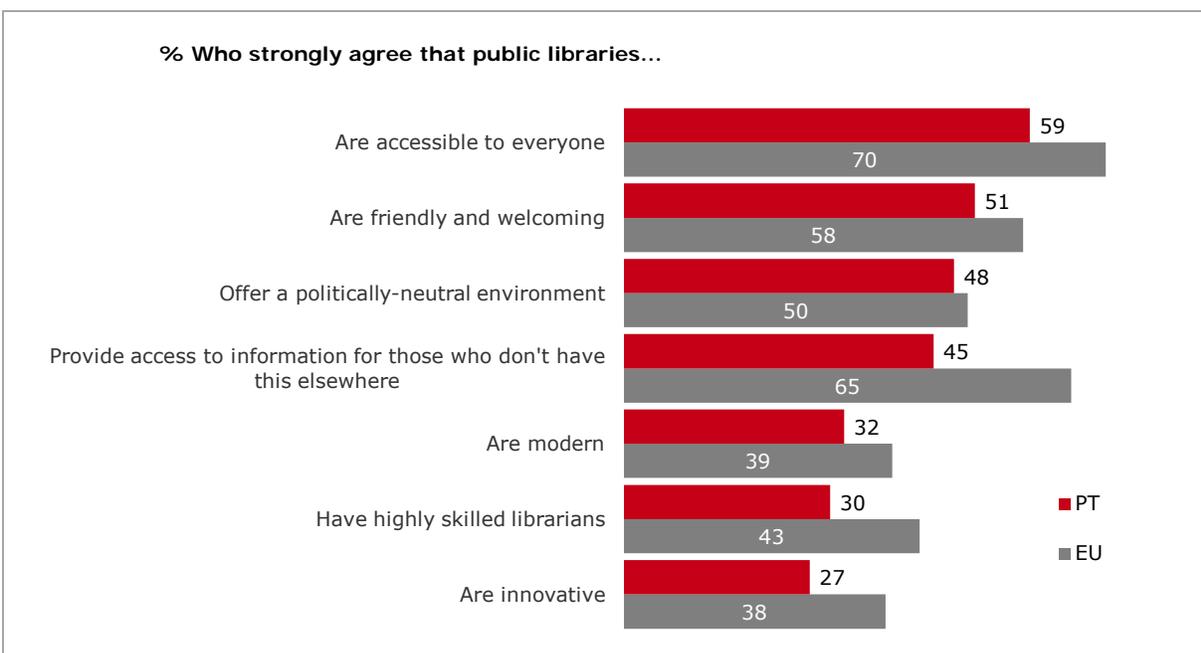
Source: Omnibus survey- Q6 How effective do you think your local public library is at meeting the needs of your community? & Q7 Which of the following statements represents most closely your opinion regarding the current funding for public libraries?

Base: All adults - PT (1261); 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 Portugal and EU who strongly agreed with each of these statements. Library users in Portugal were less likely than the EU average to strongly agree with all of these statements, with the biggest differences from the EU average for 'Provide access to information for those who don't have it elsewhere' (45% Portugal compared with 65% EU), 'Have highly skilled librarians' (30% Portugal compared with 43% EU), 'Are innovative' (27% Portugal, 38% EU) and 'Are accessible to everyone' (59% Portugal, 70% EU).

Figure 8: Perceptions of public libraries



Source: Library survey- C29 How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements.
Base: All library users. PT (1400); 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 Portugal 27% had taken part in one of the educational activities in libraries asked about in the last 12 months, which was slightly higher than the EU average of 25%.

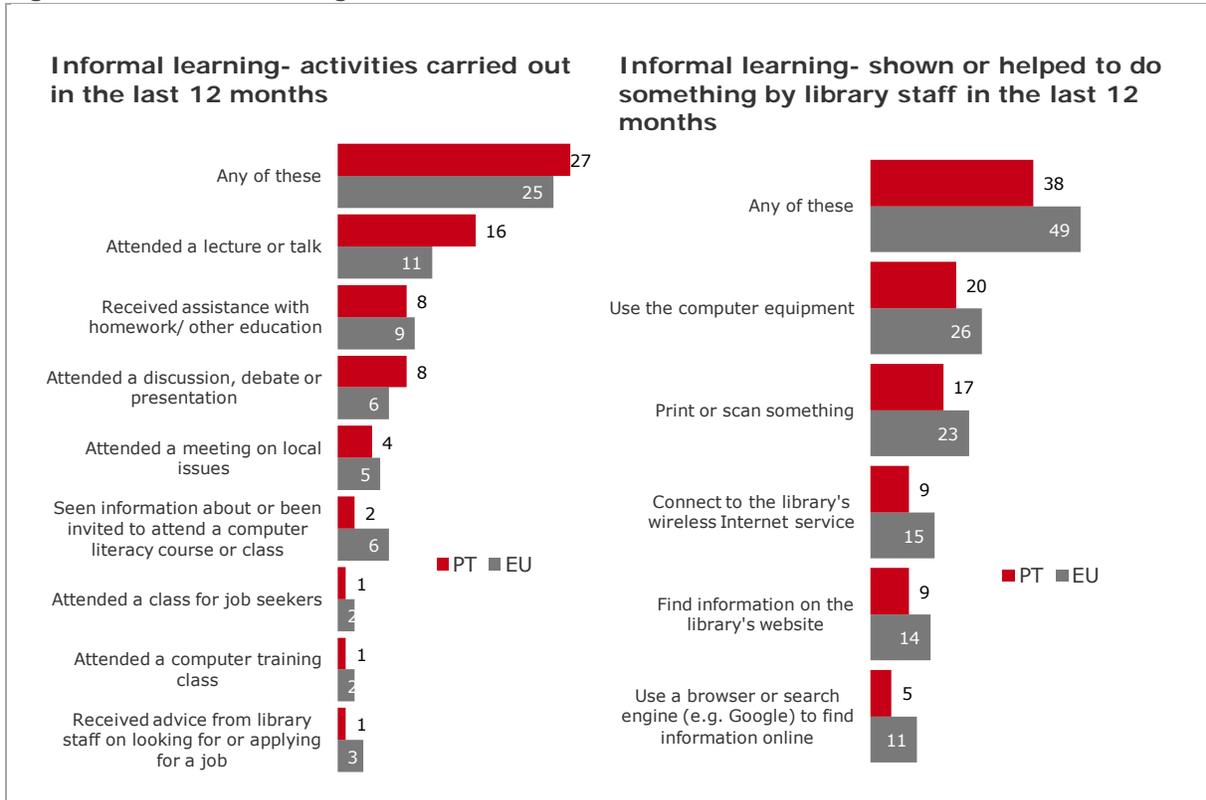
Engagement levels in all educational activities in libraries tended to be similar in Portugal to the average across the 17 EU countries as a whole (Figure 9), including, among others:

- Receiving assistance with homework or other education (8% vs. EU average of 9%).
- Attending a discussion, debate or presentation (8% vs. EU average of 6%)
- Attending a meeting on local issues (4% vs. EU average of 5%)
- Attending a lecture or talk (16% vs. EU average of 11%)

- Receiving advice from library staff on looking for/applying for a job (1% vs. EU average of 3%)

One per cent of library users in Portugal reported that they had attended a computer training class in the last 12 months – below the EU average of 2%. This means that c.14,000 adults in Portugal 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 - PT (1400); EU (24253). C17- All PAC users – PT (700); EU (11716).

As Figure 9 shows, public library staff play an important role in assisting library users in informal learning. Overall, just over a third (38%) of library users in Portugal had been shown or helped to do something by a member of library staff within the last 12 months, which was lower than the EU average of 49%.

The most common ways in which library staff assisted library users were with the use of the computer equipment, printing or scanning, connecting to the library’s wireless Internet service and finding information on the library’s website.

In the qualitative research, users considered library staff to be helpful, friendly and always ready to offer support, answer questions and spend all the necessary time with them to help them.

"They provide this kind of help in a way that makes me feel I am not asking for a favour or help. They provide it in a natural and spontaneous way." (User, Female, 25-39 years old, Portugal)

"I think there is the notion that it is a fundamental service that they can provide and that everybody needs it. So, no one ones looks at their watch and says "it's my time to go away" (User, Female, 40-64 years old, Portugal)

Users found informal support from library staff helped them to complete tasks in a more practical and efficient way while also improving their ICT skills. Despite finding staff support beneficial however, some users in urban libraries did not perceive the role of library staff to include helping users with lengthy processes, such as filling out government forms, as they understood that libraries were under-resourced.

More structured training was provided in the form of courses in topics such as basic computer and internet skills for older people, while one library ran a course on the safe use of the internet for children and adolescents.

"We try to have actions, every year, dedicated to safe internet, to alert people to the dangers of internet, especially for children, in social networks" (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Portugal)

Awareness of ICT services available in the library was good, and the most commonly identified courses were in basic ICT for seniors and basic computer knowledge and initiation to the internet for all. Users felt there was a need for further training in the library however, in subjects such as safe use of the internet for all users, basic ICT for users with a lack of digital skills, and more specific training in programmes such as Photoshop.

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.

Almost a third (29%) of PAC users in Portugal had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, on par with the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 43,000 PAC users in Portugal who had used PAC for employment related activity.

Overall, 13% of PAC users in Portugal had used a PAC to apply for a job (either in Portugal or in another EU country) in the last 12 months - this represents approximately 20,000 adults in Portugal. Of those respondents who applied for a job through PAC, 20% said that they were successful. This means that in all 3% of PAC users in Portugal – or an estimated 4,000 adults– applied for and got a job via a PAC in the last 12 months.

Public library staff have less of a role to play in supporting employment related PAC activities, as is shown in Figure 9; only 5% of PAC users in Portugal indicated that they had been shown or helped to do some employment-related PAC activity (lower than the EU average of 11%). The most common service library staff provided users with was how to write a CV (4%).

7. E-government and active citizenship

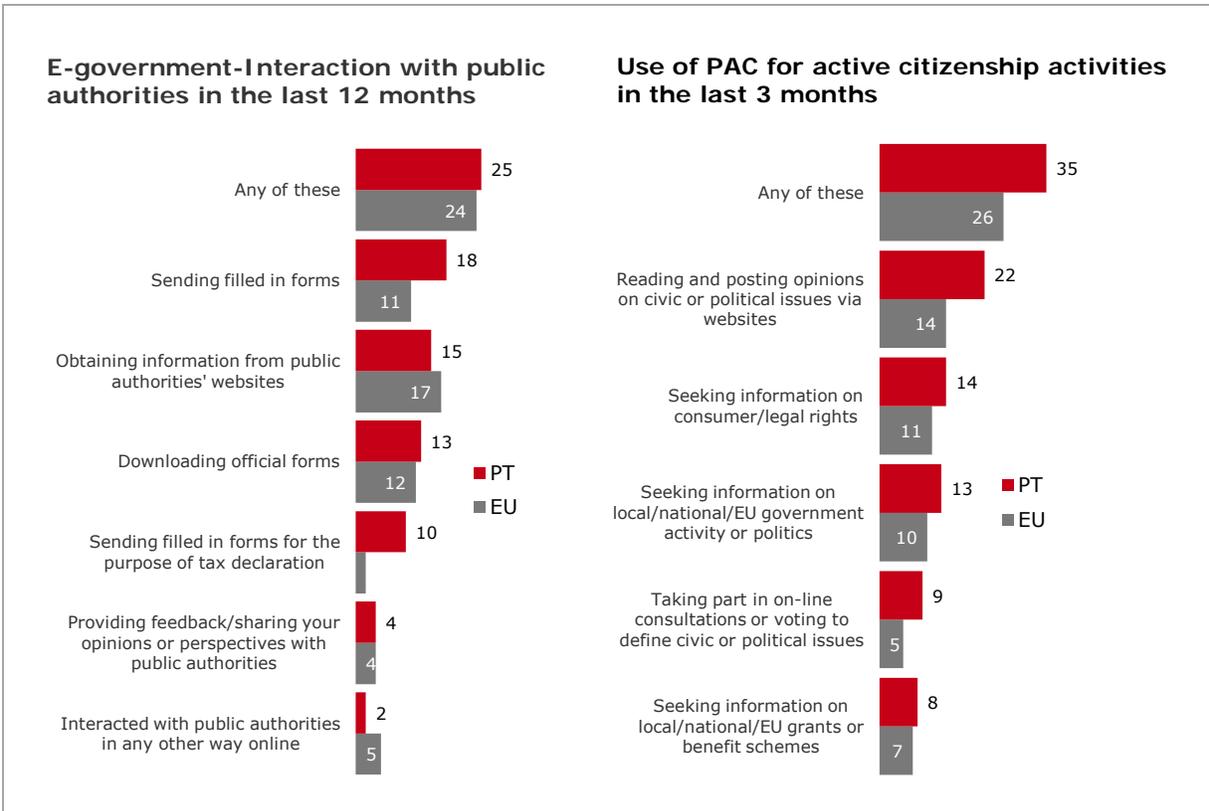
As part of the 'Connecting Europe' agenda, public libraries represent a network of public digital access points which can assist in the effective delivery of access to e-government. Computer users were asked about their interaction with public authorities using PACs, including obtaining information from 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 Portugal is similar to the EU average - 37% of adults in Portugal used the internet in the last 12 months to interact with public authorities, compared with 41% across the EU. Adults in Portugal were also as likely to use the Internet to obtain information from public authorities' web sites (33% compared with the EU average of 35%).

The library survey found that a quarter of PAC users in Portugal (25%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, on par with the EU average of one in four (24%), and below the Eurostat finding for all adults in Portugal (37%). The most common ways in which PAC users in Portugal interacted with public authorities were to send filled in forms (18%, compared with 11% across the EU) and to obtain information from public authorities' websites (15% compared with 17% across the EU). PAC users in Portugal were also much more likely to send filled in forms for the purpose of tax declaration (10%).

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, just over a third of PAC users in Portugal (35%) had used PAC for engagement activities in the past 3 months, higher than the average for users across the EU (26%). The two most common community engagement activities were reading and posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (22% Portugal compared with 14% EU) and seeking information on consumer/legal rights (14% Portugal, broadly similar to the EU level of 11%).

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. PT (700); EU (11716)

In the qualitative research, libraries did not offer any formal training regarding civic participation because users did not show much interest in this area. However some libraries provided informal support with e-government tasks, such as by helping users to fill out government forms online, make requests or complaints and present certificates. This assistance was particularly useful for seniors and users with a low level of education that had limited digital skills and needed help interacting with public administration online.

"We have increasing demand mostly by older people in how to relate with public administration, the government. And we give our informal support (...) and our staff has the basic skills to explain how to create an email or how to relate with social security online". (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Portugal)

8. Impacts

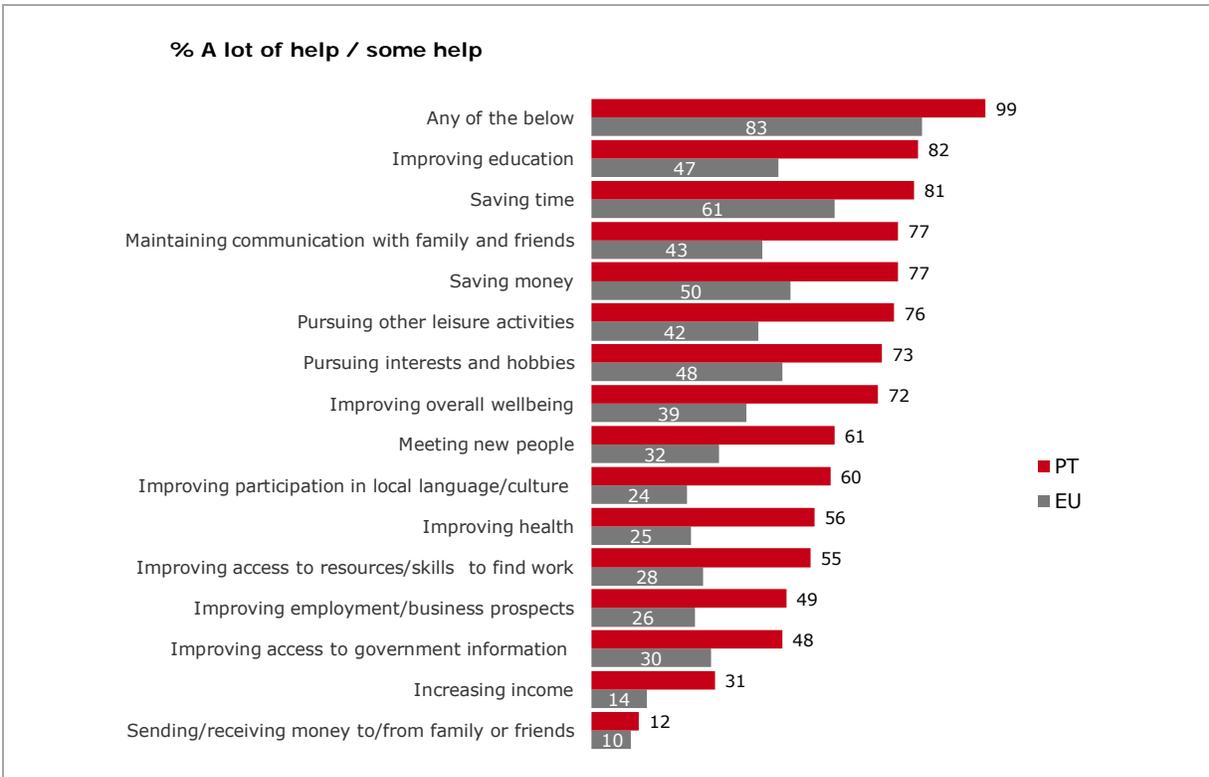
A key aim of this research was to evaluate the impact of increased digital engagement through PAC use for users. This was assessed by asking PAC users how helpful using computers at public libraries had

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 99% of PAC users in Portugal said their PAC use had been helpful to them in at least one of the areas asked about, higher than the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 0.1 million people in Portugal.

Figure 12 shows the proportions saying PAC use had been helpful in each area, in Portugal 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- PT (700); EU (11716).

As well as the general area of saving time (81% Portugal, 61% EU), PAC use was rated as helpful across a range of leisure and social areas such as maintaining communication with family and friends (77% Portugal, 43% EU), pursuing other leisure activities (76% Portugal, 42% EU) and pursuing interests and hobbies (73% Portugal, 48% EU). Three quarters of PAC users (77%) in Portugal, compared to half (50%) across the 17 EU countries, said PAC was helpful in saving money, which represents an estimated 113,000 PAC users in Portugal.

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

- 121,000 people to improve their education
- 81,000 people to improve their access to resources necessary to find work
- 72,000 people to improve their access to government information services
- 73,000 people to improve their employment or business prospects

- 46,000 people to increase their income.

In the qualitative research users reported a growing sense of confidence and independence to carry out ICT tasks on their own since using library ICT services.

"The first time I've felt inhibited but then I started to question and asking for help and now I feel totally comfortable," (User, Female, 25-39 years old, Portugal)

This confidence had precipitated greater motivation to learn more and improve ICT skills further.

"We became enthusiastic and we wanted more. When we started to hit the first keys of the keyboard, then we can do it by ourselves we want to continue doing in and learn more" (Recent first time User, Female, 40-64 years old, Portugal)

Such skills had enabled them to save time by carrying out a number of important tasks online, such as interacting with central administration. Support from library staff had also impacted on users' professional life by helping them to find a job or complete exams and so improve their qualifications. Another benefit of library ICT was that users had been able to keep in touch with family and friends abroad and access social networks, which had made a particular difference to the lives of older users.

"I had a user with 94 years old who ended up being my friend, he learned for instance how to browse the internet, how to send emails, and he started to send e-mails to everyone, he even started to receive the electricity's bill online, [...] when he died his daughters came to thank me for having provided a great last few years for their father" (Senior Library Manager, Urban, Portugal)

Because access to library ICT was free of charge, it had had a particular impact on low income users, as it allowed them to access information, do professional work and studies and communicate with others in a way that they would not have otherwise been able to afford to do. Because of the availability of hardware and software to meet specific needs, some blind users had begun to use the library more frequently.

"I found out that the library provides a special service: books in braille and a computer that is called "Mais acesso" which has software that helps me using the internet, checking my emails, to work..." (User, Male, 16-24 years old, Portugal)