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

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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 Spain and compares the results to the EU total.

The public library landscape

- The desk research estimates that there are 4,164[1] public libraries in Spain, which equates to 1 library per 10,000 population, below the average of 1.3 libraries per 10,000 population across the EU.
- Computer access is currently available in 89% of public libraries in Spain.

Library and PAC usage

- An estimated 8.6 million adults in Spain, around one in five adults in the country (22%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, similar to the figure of 23% of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 1 million adults in Spain, 3% of adults, had used PACs in the last 12 months, similar to the average of 4% of adults across the EU.
- PAC users in Spain were more likely than the EU average to be men, to be aged 25-39, to live in a rural area or village, and to have stopped full-time education aged 20 or more.
- The primary motivation of PAC users across the EU, and even more so in Spain, is the free nature of the service. PAC users in Spain were less likely than the EU average to say that they had no other option for computer access (12% Spain compared with 19% EU).
- Overall, it is estimated that 0.3 million PAC users in Spain had nowhere else to access the internet, or to access the internet free of charge.
- Users in Spain were slightly less likely to place a high value on the PAC service than the EU average. Overall, 95% of users in Spain said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, broadly similar to the EU average (92%). However, PAC users in Spain were somewhat less likely to say the service was extremely valuable (26%) than the EU average (36%).
- Satisfaction with computers and the internet at public libraries was high among users: 92% of users in Spain were satisfied, although the proportion who said that they were very satisfied, at 28%, was lower than the EU average of 47%.

[1] [1] Annual Report 2012 of Cultural Statistics/ Libraries- Data for 2010.

Perceptions and impacts of public libraries

- Around nine out of ten library users in Spain considered 'free access to computers' and 'free access to the internet' important (compared with around seven out of ten library users across Europe).
- More than three quarters (78%) of the general public in Spain (including both library users and non-users) felt libraries were either very effective, effective or fairly effective at meeting the needs of their local community. This was higher than the average across the EU of 64%.
- Just over half (55%) of the public in Spain felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, which was higher than the EU average (40%).
- Overall 94% of PAC users in Spain said their PAC use had delivered at least one impact for them, higher than the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 0.9 million people in Spain.
- Library users in Spain were much less likely than the EU average to strongly agree with a range of statements about libraries, with the biggest differences from the EU average for 'Offer a politically neutral environment' (28% Spain compared with 50% EU), 'Have highly skilled librarians' (23% Spain compared with 43% EU) and 'Are friendly and welcoming' (39% Spain, 58% EU).

Informal and non-formal learning

- In Spain 27% of library users had taken part in an educational activity in a library in the last 12 months, similar to the EU average of 25%.

Employment and use of PACs for business

- Around three in ten (31%) PAC users in Spain had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, in line with the the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 0.3 million PAC users in Spain who had used PAC for employment related activity.
- An estimated 94,000 PAC users in Spain had used a PAC to apply for a job in the last 12 months, and an estimated 14,000 adults were successful in securing employment by this means.

E-government and active citizenship

- The library survey found that around three in ten PAC users in Spain (30%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, slightly higher than the EU average of one in four (24%). The most common ways in which PAC users in Spain interacted with public authorities were to obtain information from public authorities' websites (25%), downloading official forms (17%), and sending filled in forms (15%).
- Overall, two fifths of PAC users in Spain (41%) had used PAC for civic engagement activities in the past 3 months, higher than the average for users across the EU (26%). The two most common community engagement activities were reading and posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (22% Spain compared with 14% EU) and seeking information on local/national/EU grants or benefit schemes (20% Spain compared with 7% EU).

1. Background and methodology

1.1 Context for the research

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

There is a growing body of evidence about the ways public access to ICTs contributes to economic, health, education, and social development[2]. 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,[3] but in 2011, just 41% of the EU population used government services electronically.[4] 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)[5].

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

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

1.2 Research objectives

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

1.3 Research method

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

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[2] 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.

[3] Eurostat, 2010

[4] Eurostat, 2011

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

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

- A representative sample of 1,000 members of the general public aged 15+ in Spain (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 Spain, 705 interviews were conducted with people who had not used Public Access Computers (PACs) in libraries (12,537 across the 17 countries) and 713 with those who had (11,716 across the 17 countries). The interviews in Spain were conducted in 50 libraries which were selected and contacted with help from a representative of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. 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 Spain and compares the results to the EU total. EU results are based on findings from the 17 countries included in this study. Individual reports for each country surveyed have been produced as well as an overall report[6].

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

2. The public library landscape and internet provision

There were 4,164 public libraries in Spain in 2010, which equates to 1 public library per 10,000 population, below the average across the 17 EU countries of 1.3 libraries per 10,000.

[6] Quick, Prior, Toombs, Taylor and Currenti (2013): *Cross-European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries* (funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation)

Public libraries in Spain are broken down by type according to the body that owns and runs them, with the majority operated by local administrations:

- 3,989 under local administration
- 68 under the administration of autonomous communities
- 52 under national administration
- 43 private
- 12 other.

The 52 state public libraries are, with a few exceptions, spread across the 50 provincial capitals of Spain with the remaining 4,112 libraries located throughout the country. These 52 state public libraries are owned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, but managed by the autonomous communities.

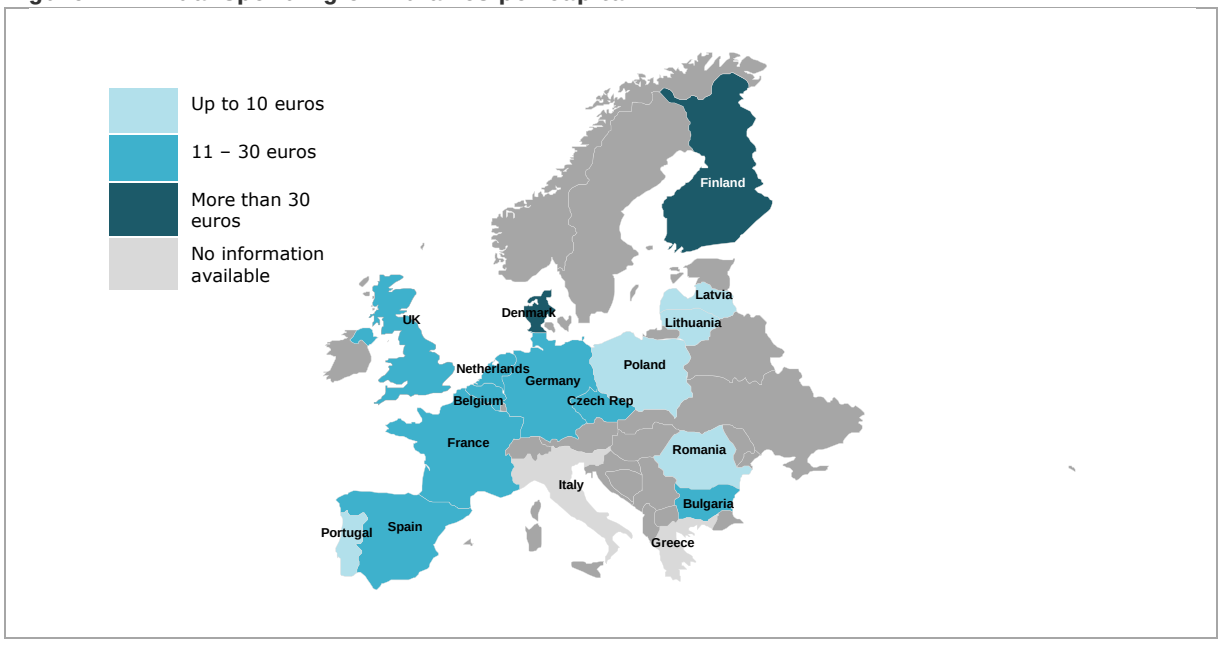
The Spanish Ministry of Culture has ultimate authority and responsibility for legislative and operational matters.

In addition to these 4,164 libraries, there were 1,898 specialist libraries, 283 libraries in institutes of higher education and 254 libraries with restricted admission for specific user groups.

In 2010 almost all staff employed in libraries in Spain were professional employees (96%), with the remainder made up of volunteers and student assistants.

Public spending on libraries per person in Spain is 11.9 Euros, rather lower than in most other EU countries. The following map shows the pattern of expenditure across Europe.

Figure 1: Annual spending on libraries per capita



Source: TNS desk research

Computer access is offered by 89% of libraries in Spain. The proportion of public libraries with Internet access in Spain is 94%.

Eurostat data (2011) on Internet access at home shows that Spain is somewhat behind the overall level in Europe, with 64% of households in Spain having access to the Internet, compared with an EU average of 73%. It may therefore be expected that demand for and usage of PAC services would be higher in Spain than in other countries.

3. Library and PAC usage

3.1 Access to libraries and PACs

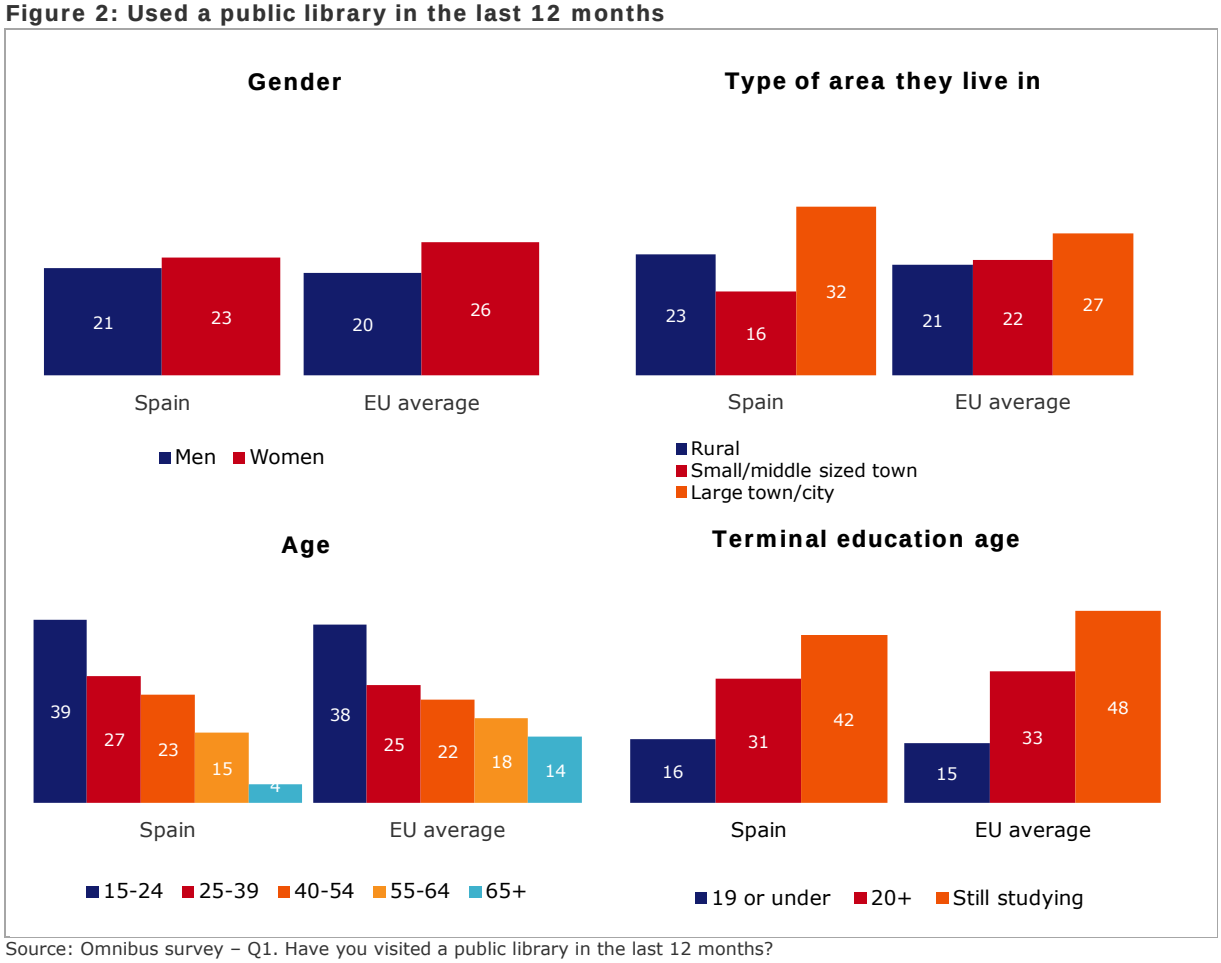
The general public survey found that library usage in Spain was in line with the EU average.

- An estimated 8.6 million adults in Spain, just over one in five adults in the country (22%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, similar to the figure of 23% of all adults across Europe.
- An estimated 5.7 million adults, just over one in seven adults in Spain (15%), had used a library at least once a month, again similar to the EU average of 14%.

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

- Men (21%) and women (23%) were almost equally likely to have visited a library, in contrast to the findings across the EU where women (26%) were more likely than men (20%) to have done so.
- Library usage was highest among those aged 15-24 (39%), and usage decreased as age increased. Across all but the very oldest age group, library usage in Spain was broadly comparable with the EU average. In the 65+ age group library usage in Spain (4%) was much lower than the EU average (14%).
- Library use was much higher among those who were still studying – two fifths of this group (42%) had used a public library in the last 12 months, below the EU average (48%).
- Library use was higher in large towns and cities (32%) than in smaller towns (16%) or rural areas (23%).

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: Spain – All adults (1000), Men (485), Women (515), 15-24 (142), 25-39 (301), 40-54 (244) 55-64 (118), 65+ (195), Large town/city (201), Small town (299), Rural area (414), Finished education 19 or under (615), 20 or over (180), Still studying (97). 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 Spain, compared with across the EU, was:

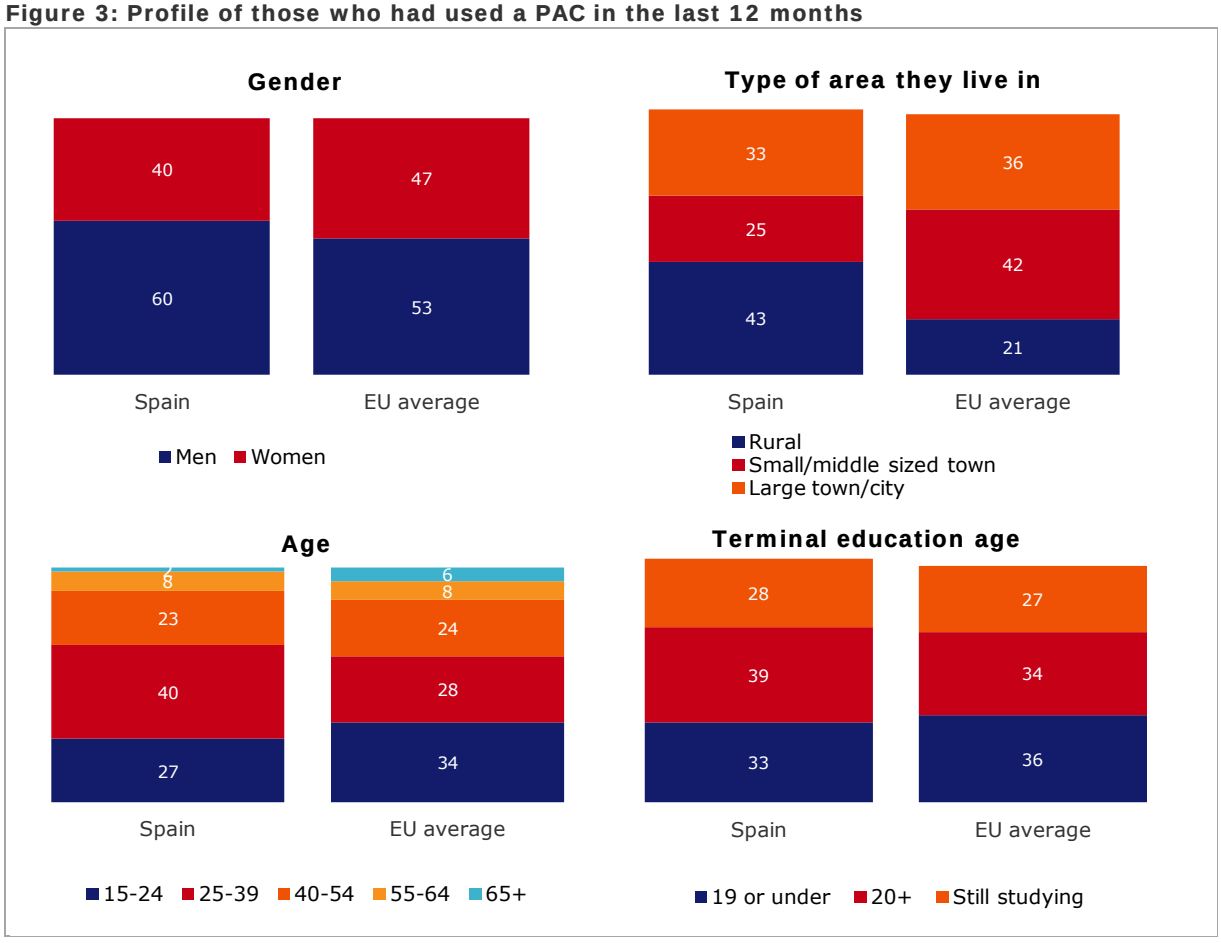
- 48% of library users in Spain were men, 52% women. Users in Spain were somewhat more likely to be men compared with the EU average (42% men, 58% women)
- Users in Spain had a much younger age profile than the EU average – 26% were aged 15-24, 38% aged 25-39, 24% aged 40-54, 8% aged 55-64 and 4% aged 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+.

One in nine (11%) of those who had visited a library in Spain in the last 12 months had used a PAC, slightly lower than the EU average of 14%. When those who had not used a PAC were asked why this was, although the large majority (75%) said they had no need to because they had a computer/internet at home, a significant minority of 6% said they did not know how to use computers or the internet, implying that there is potential for libraries to further increase their customer base for PAC.

In total, the survey found that 3% of adults in Spain had used PACs in the last 12 months, similar to the average of 4% of adults across the EU countries. This is estimated to be around 1 million adults in Spain.

PAC users in Spain were more likely than the EU average to be men, to be aged 25-39, to live in a rural area or village, and to have stopped full-time education aged 20 or more, 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: Spain (713), EU (11716).

Over a third (36%) of PAC users in Spain made use of PACs at least once a week, compared with 23% across the EU, with a quarter (25%) doing so once to three times a month (compared with 29% across the EU). Just under two fifths (37%) had used PACs once every three months or less often, compared with the EU average of 47%.

In the qualitative research, library managers did not consider it necessary to establish mechanisms to encourage current library visitors to use ICT in public libraries. In fact, most of the libraries agreed that demand for everything related to ICT was already too high which forced them to set schedules, sometimes too strict and not practical for users, in order to limit their use.

> *"The truth is that we don't need to encourage people… our computers are never free" (Library Manager, Urban, Spain)*

It was perceived that what was really lacking were more resources to enable residents to have better access to ICT in libraries. This appeared to be the main reason why libraries did not attract other segments of the population that did not use ICT. Each librarian had a different vision on the needs of these population groups. Their visions were partly influenced by the particular idiosyncrasy of the library depending on its location:

- **Fages de Climent Municipal Library** (Figueres): in this case the main needs related to basic ICT training as many users, from all age ranges, did not know much about new technologies. Additionally, users needed help with using ICT for job hunting, house hunting or simply regarding the use of social media.

  "There is a need for basic training because many people from different age groups do not know how to use ICT" (Library Manager, Semi urban, Spain)

- **Villa de Vallecas "Luis Marín Santos" Public Library** (Madrid): the key user need in this library was support with job hunting due to the high unemployment rate in the local area.

  "The needs are basically work related: being able to find a job, training on how to create an account in job search websites...." (Library Manager, Urban, Spain)

- **Peñaranda de Bracamonte – Germán Sánchez Ruipérez Foundation Public Municipal Library (Salamanca):** this library is located in a rural area, where the population is much older and needed a general, basic introduction to ICT.

  "There are older people who don´t know how to use ICT and it would be advisable to give them some sort of training so they can adapt to the times" (Library Manager, Semi urban, Spain)

The obstacles libraries faced had to do with available resources mainly, related both to the number of computers and the type of training from library staff.

"We simply need more computers" (Library Manager, Urban, Spain)

Also noted was the lack of training of library staff on issues related to ICT. In all cases, their training was totally autodidactic: they had no accreditation and were self-taught. Worth highlighting is the case of the library in Figueres where they were thinking of creating a training programme for library staff that might become mandatory in the future. Called ACTIC, this would be an accreditation awarded by the Generalitat de Catalunya (the Spanish region where Figueres is located).

"We are now thinking of taking the ACTIC exam which is not currently mandatory but might be next year" (Library Manager, Semi rural, Spain)

Despite the existence of unemployed people, those on low incomes, ethnic minorities and older people within their areas of operation, none of the libraries included in the qualitative research have developed specific initiatives to encourage the use of ICT amongst them.

"The truth is that we don't do anything special… when a new digital service becomes available we present it to the whole town, but very few people come" (Library Manager, Semi rural, Spain)

It was reported that in some instances activities to encourage the use of ICT amongst certain groups within the community were undertaken by other institutions like community or cultural centres but never libraries, despite the fact that they were in a position to play an important and useful role in this regard.

Users were asked what their main reasons were for using computers, the internet and software in public libraries. Many of the users interviewed were unemployed so felt they needed to set themselves a routine and organize their time. Therefore, the library has become their "place of work" in the most sociological sense of the word; a place with a timetable where they could be disciplined and do certain things with some sort of continuity.

> *"I come here every day, it's a way of keeping myself busy now that I'm unemployed, otherwise it would feel like I wasn´t doing anything during the whole day..." (User, Female, 25-39, Spain)*

It is also necessary to point out the important role the library played as a place secluded from everywhere else, where one could relax.

> *"Being here is like being on an island..." (Recent first time user, Male, 46-65, Spain)*

The main functions for which ICT was used included web searches, emailing, downloading and connecting to social media. Other ICT related activities, like the use of office suite programs, did not usually take place in libraries due to the strict timetables set for the use of computers due to the large number of users. This means that usually computers were restricted to only one hour per day. It was obvious that this issue, caused by the small number of computers available compared to the demand, meant that ICT in libraries was not used to its full potential.

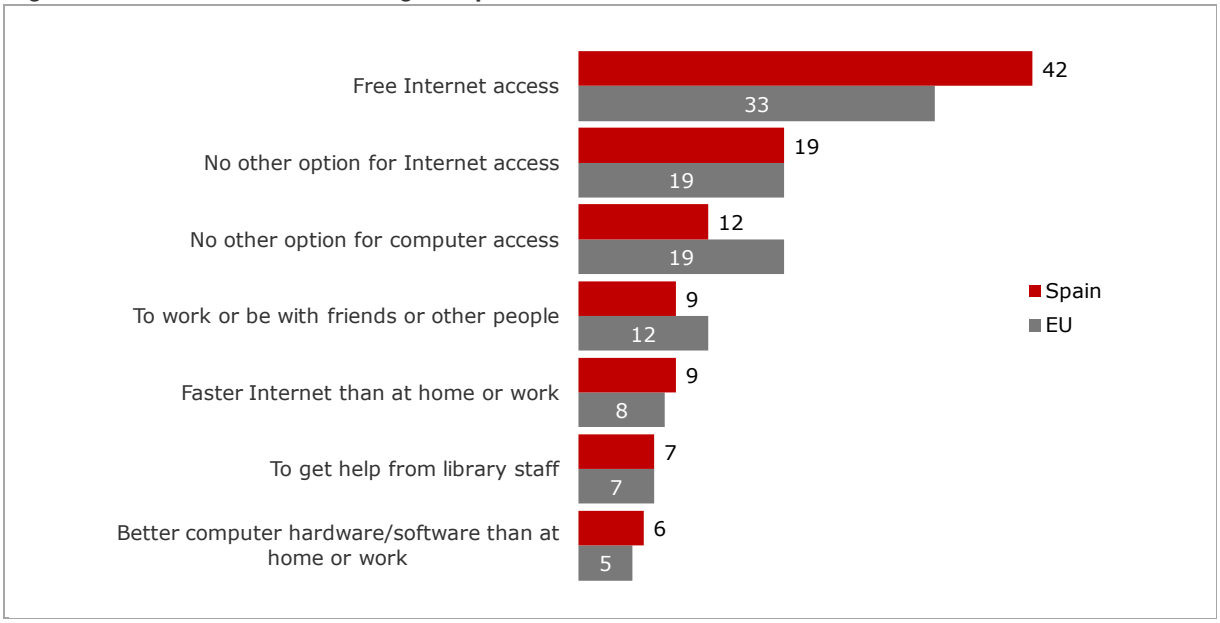
> *"Putting together a document or something else on the computer is impossible ... you don´t have enough time" (User, Female, 25-39, Spain)*

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 Spain, the primary motivation for PAC users is the free nature of the service.

PAC users in Spain were less likely than those in the 17 EU countries as a whole to have said that they had no other option for computer access (12% in Spain compared with 19% across the EU). Although Eurostat data (2011) shows that Spain, compared to EU level, has a lower penetration of adults with Internet access at home, PAC users in Spain were no more likely than those across the EU to have mentioned no other option for Internet access as a main 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- Spain (713); 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 Spain, 10% of PAC users said that they had no other options for accessing the internet (similar to the 11% across the EU), and a further 19% that there was no other source of free internet for them (compared with 14% across the EU). Overall, it is estimated that 0.3 million PAC users in Spain (29% 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 be older and to have left education at a young age, groups who are often 'digitally excluded' (and 'socially excluded'), 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:

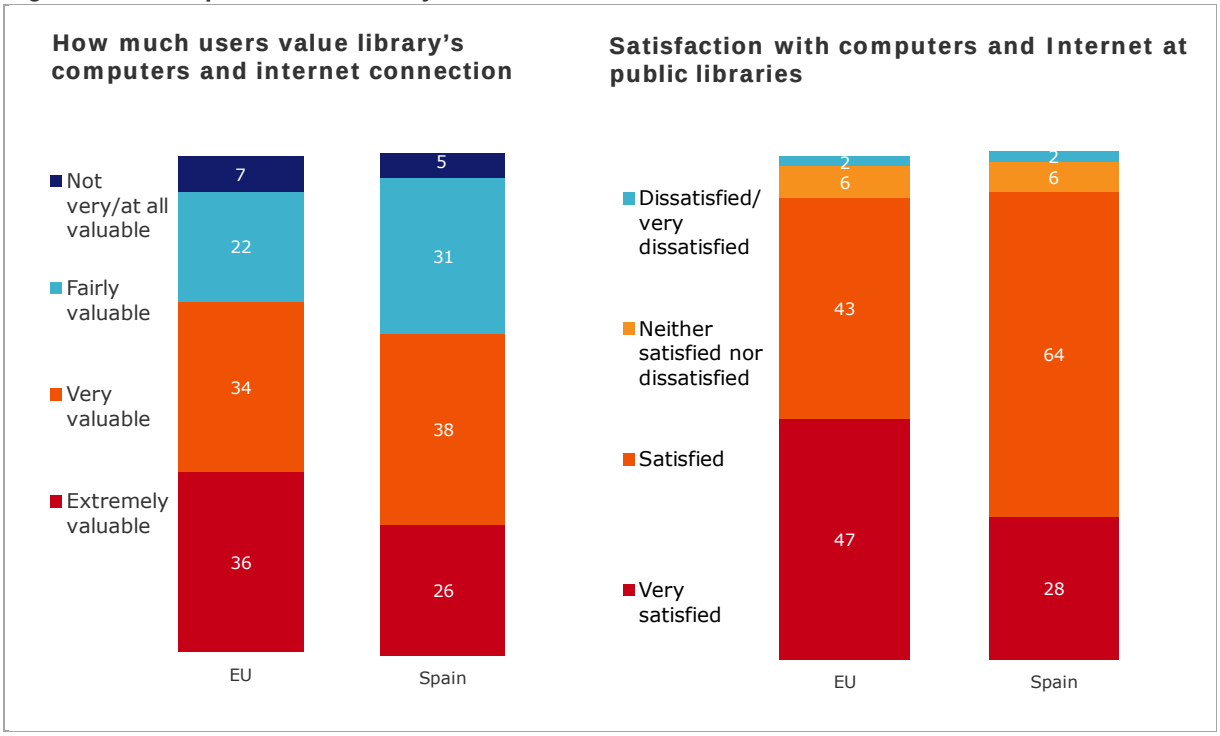
- 55-64 year olds (25%) and those aged 65+ (38%), particularly when compared with those aged 15-24 (1%) and 25-39 (6%)
- Those who left full-time education at the age of 15 or under (40%), particularly when compared with those who stayed on in full-time education beyond age 19 (7%) and those who were still studying (1%).

Users in Spain were slightly less likely to place a high value on the PAC service than users across the 17 EU countries, as shown in Figure 5. Overall, 95% of PAC users in Spain said that the library's computer and internet connection services were valuable, broadly similar to the figure for PAC users across the EU (92%). However, PAC users in Spain were somewhat less likely to say that the service was extremely valuable (26%) compared with the EU average (36%), as shown in Figure 5.

The library's computers and internet connection were valued particularly highly in Spain by users who finished their full-time education aged 15 or under where nearly half (46%) 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 Spain (92%) said that they were satisfied. Around three in ten users (28%) said that they were very satisfied, much lower than the EU average (47%).

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



Source: Library survey - C30 How much do you value the library's computers and Internet connection? & C31 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your access to computers and the Internet at public libraries?
Base: All PAC users. Spain (713); EU (11716)

In Spain two thirds of all PAC users (67%) said that when they go to a library to use a computer they find a free computer straightaway, slightly below the EU average of 72%. A further one in six (17%) said that they have to wait for no more than 10 minutes, compared with the EU average of 16%. Around one in nine said that they had to wait at least 10 minutes (11%, compared with the EU average of 7%), and a small minority (4%) said that they needed to book ahead of time in order for a computer to be available (compared with 3% across the EU).

The qualitative research found that the number of computers available in a library varied greatly depending on attendance levels which, in turn, related to the size of the town where the library was located. In the case of the Madrid and Valencia libraries therefore, there were 39 computers for users, versus 19 at the Library in Figueres, 12 in Peñaranda de Bracamonte and 10 in Andorra. Only some of these had other types of hardware like printers or scanners.

Libraries in bigger cities had a higher usage per equipment ratio and therefore the state of the devices were reported by library managers to be more worn out and used.

> *"The computers work badly, really badly…the ones we have today are four years old…they need to be replaced urgently" (Library Manager, Urban, Spain)*

On the other hand, computers in libraries with smaller numbers of visitors were more up to date and in better condition.

> *"Our computers are really good. We have someone who takes care of the equipment in the whole centre…they are up-to-date" (Library Manager, Semi rural, Spain)*

Similarly, the more users there were connected, the slower the internet connection speed. All the libraries in the qualitative sample had Wi-Fi connection (and librarians saw it being used with laptops and smartphones). The reason for use was not clear to librarians but thought to be mainly used to connect to social media.

Overall, user satisfaction with the equipment in libraries in the qualitative research was low, with some slight variation: in the case of the library in Madrid computers met users' expectations in terms of updates and how they worked but they were dissatisfied with the fact that printers were not available. In Valencia and Figueres, as librarians themselves commented during the interview, users were totally dissatisfied with the equipment: the computers were out-dated, slow and they did not work well.

In line with the opinions of librarians, the number of computers available in public libraries was considered to be totally insufficient by users, with the exception of the library in Madrid. However the Madrid library lacked other kinds of equipment such as a printer, forcing users to print in nearby internet cafés when necessary.

> *"When you want to print you have to go to the Internet café and it´s a hassle ... I don´t understand why they don´t install a printer here, even if they charged for using this service" (User, Female, 25-39, Spain)*

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

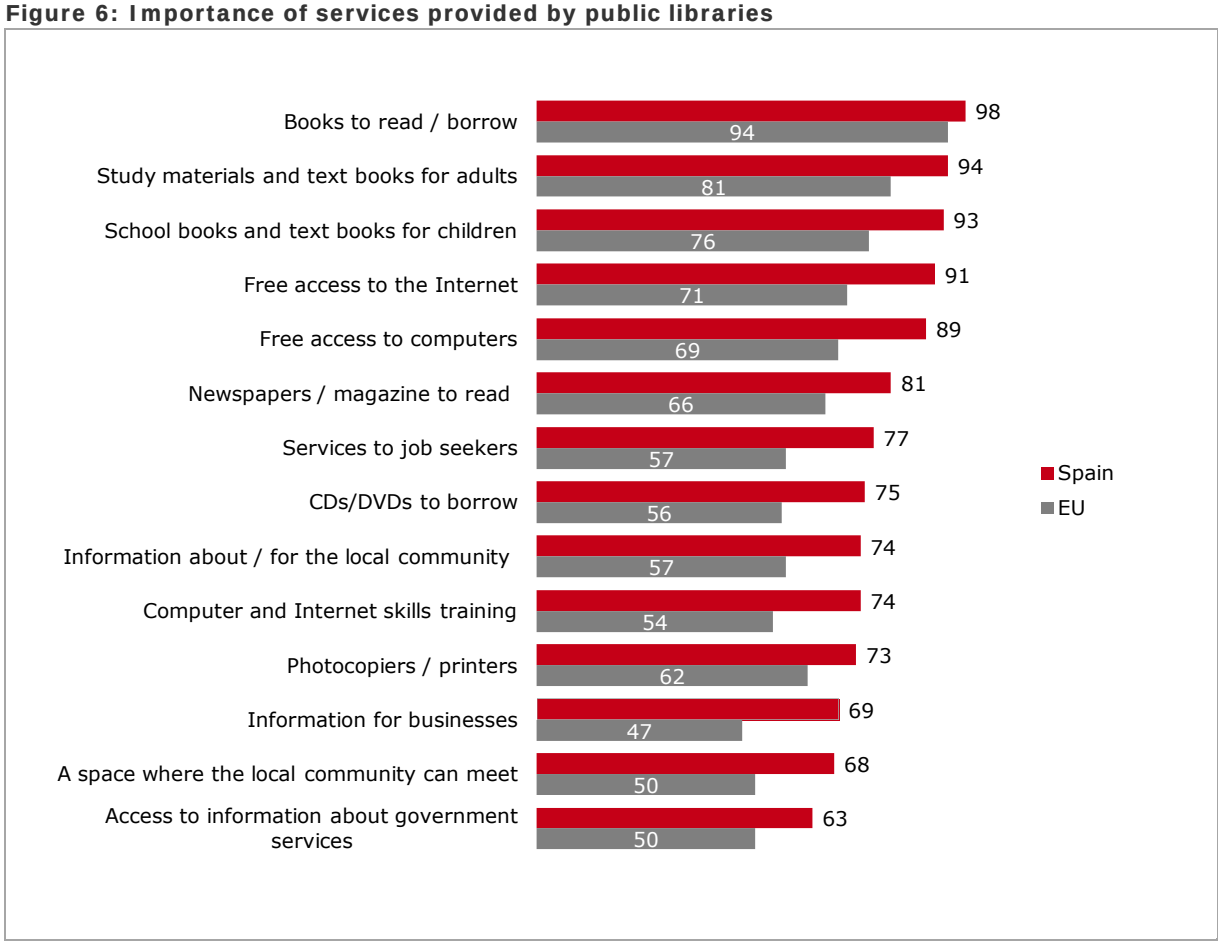
For all of the services, users in Spain were more likely than users across the EU to rate services as 4 or 5 on the scale. Not surprisingly, the core service of 'books to read/borrow' was considered the most important, rated as important by 98% of users in Spain (and 94% across the EU), followed by 'study materials and text books for adults' (ES 94% vs. EU 81%) and 'school books and text books for children' (ES 93% vs. EU 76%).

'Free access to the internet' and 'free access to computers' were both rated among the most important services by library users in Spain, around nine in ten considering each important, compared with the equivalent figure of around seven out of ten users across Europe. Three quarters of users in Spain (74%) rated the provision of computer and Internet skills training as an important service, compared with the 54% EU average.

The importance of libraries to community life was emphasised among library users in Spain. Providing information about or for the local community was seen as particularly important among users in Spain

(74% compared with 57% EU average), as was providing a space where the local community can meet (68% compared with 50% EU average).

Figure 6: Importance of services provided by public libraries



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

Base: All library users - Spain (1418); EU (24253)

The qualitative research found that the library was perceived as a place secluded from everywhere else, where one could relax.

> *"Being here is like being on an island..." (Recent first time user, Male, 46-65, Spain)*

This feeling was linked to how users described the environment in libraries. The most widely used adjectives were to do with peace, silence, relaxation, and it was clear that libraries were a place where users felt at ease. An exception was in the case of the library in Figueres, where the noise of people talking was considered to be very disturbing.

4.2 Effectiveness and funding of public libraries

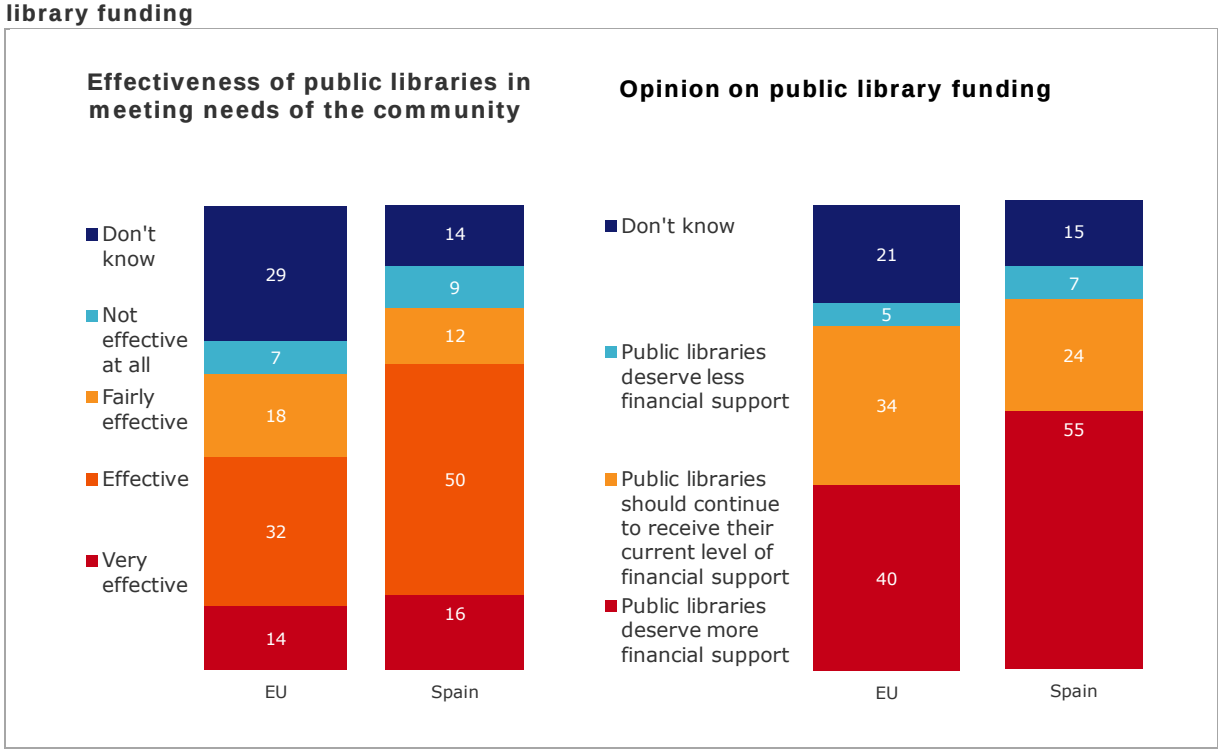
More than three quarters (78%) of the general public in Spain (including both library users and non-users) felt libraries were either very effective, effective or fairly effective at meeting the needs of their local community. This was higher than the average across the 17 EU survey countries of 64%.

Library users and PAC users in Spain were almost unanimous in their opinion that libraries were effective in meeting the needs of their local community – 95% of all library users felt they were effective, rising to 97% among PAC users.

Just over half (55%) of the public in Spain felt that public libraries merited more financial support than at present, which was higher than the average of all 17 EU countries (40%). Almost all the remainder either felt that the funding should continue as at present (24%) or did not express an opinion (15%). One in fourteen (7%) felt that public libraries deserve *less* financial support, broadly in line with the EU average (5%).

Library users and PAC users were somewhat more likely than non-users to say that libraries deserve more financial support – 63% of all library users and 69% 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



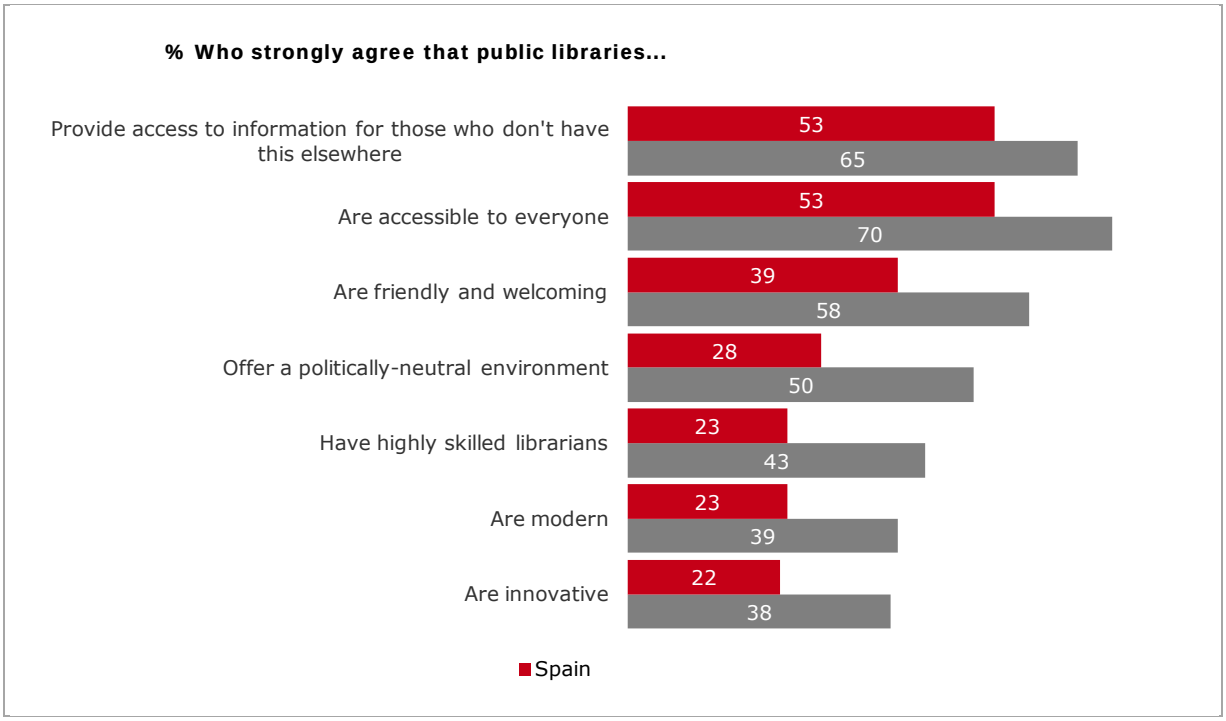
Source: Omnibus survey- Q6 How effective do you think your local public library is at meeting the needs of your community? & Q7 Which of the following statements represents most closely your opinion regarding the current funding for public libraries?

Base: All adults - Spain (1000); EU (17816)

4.3 Perceptions of public libraries

All library users were asked their opinions of public libraries, through a series of agree/disagree statements. Figure 8 shows the proportions in Spain and EU who strongly agreed with each of these statements. Library users in Spain were much less likely than the EU average to strongly agree with all of these statements, with the biggest differences from the EU average for 'Offer a politically neutral environment' (28% ES compared with 50% EU), 'Have highly skilled librarians' (23% ES compared with 43% EU) and 'Are friendly and welcoming' (39% ES, 58% 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. Spain (1418); EU (24253)

5. Informal and non-formal learning

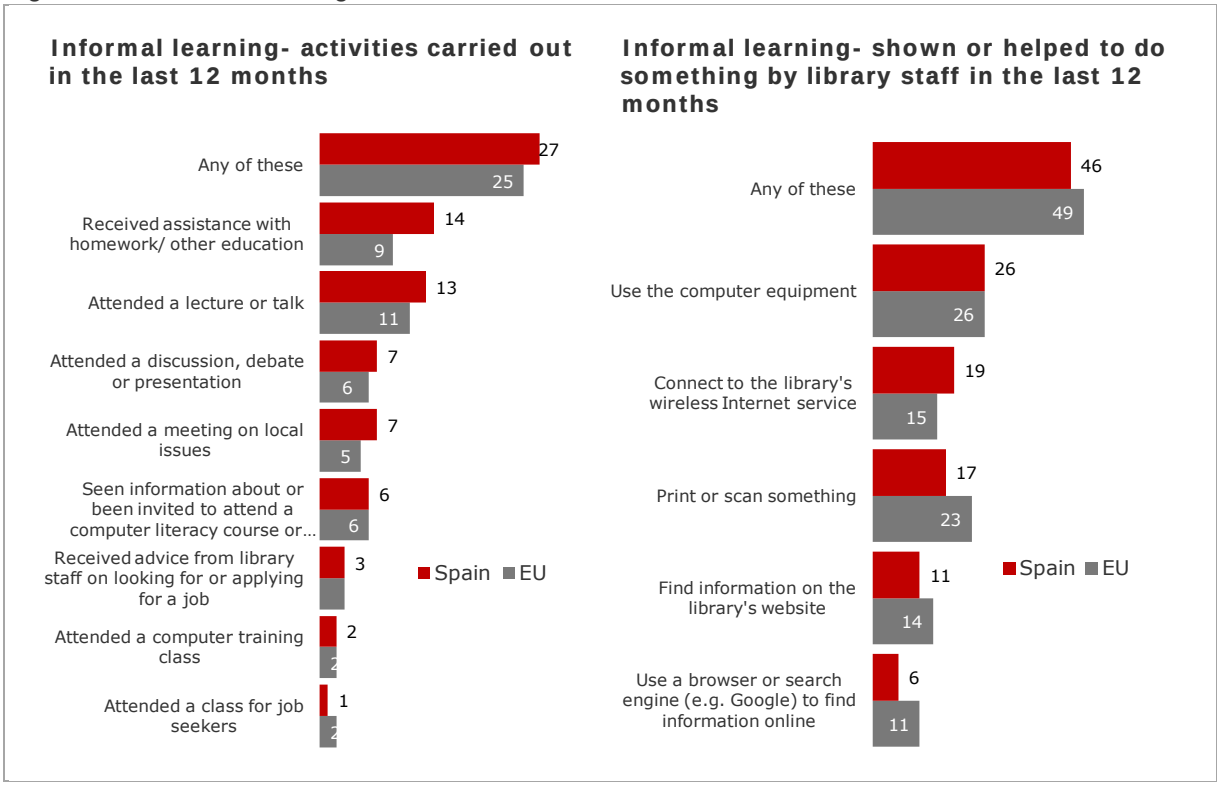
Public libraries are key players in the delivery of the non-formal/informal component of the European Commission's lifelong learning policy, particularly with regard to *inclusive* delivery. The role of libraries in providing education to users was explored through asking all library users whether or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

Overall, in Spain just over a quarter of all users (27%) had taken part in one of the educational activities in libraries asked about in the last 12 months, similar to the EU average of 25%.

Engagement levels in most educational activities in libraries tended to be similar in Spain compared with the EU as a whole (Figure 9). Users in Spain were more likely than the EU average to have received assistance with homework or other education (14% vs. EU average of 9%).

In terms of computer training, c.140,000 adults in Spain 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 - Spain (1418); EU (24253). C17- All PAC users – Spain (713); EU (11716).

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

The most common ways in which library staff assisted library users in Spain were with using the computer equipment, connecting to the library's wireless Internet service and printing or scanning something.

The qualitative research found that libraries offered a counselling service that was generally limited to addressing very basic issues such as how to access the session or how to print or scan.

> *"We offer continuous support in the sense that we help with queries or answer questions that are raised…. concerning Word, Excel, applications, how to navigate the Internet..." (Library Manager, Urban, Spain)*

Most libraries also organised more formal but basic introductory courses to computers and the internet.

> *"We run a course in which we teach them how to handle the keyboard, the mouse..." (Library Manager, Semi rural, Spain)*

Users who benefitted the most from such courses were the elderly, those with a very basic level of education and those that had not had the opportunity to use ICT during their education, at work or in their own homes.

Examples of more structured training provided by libraries included:

- Youth Book Club: The library in Figueres set up a book club aimed at young people. The library created a blog where the book club members could comment on the books that they were reading.
- Cloudtheque: this is a project started by the library in Peñaranda de Bracamonte and consisted of gathering videos, films, music and eBooks in one place, which was accessible from a computer.
- "We subscribe to Premium platforms which give us access to all these materials that we then make available to users" (Library Manager, Semi Urban, Spain)
- eBook Territory: also developed by the library in Peñaranda de Bracamonte, this project promotes reading through eBooks.

There was a general lack of awareness among users of the existence of qualified staff to give advice or training on issues related to ICT. In most cases users spontaneously said that they were not aware of the existence of training provided by libraries. Others who did know that the service existed knew little about it.

> *"I know of a basic computer course that I saw advertised on the bulletin board but I didn´t pay much attention to it" (User, Male, 40-65, Spain)*

During the interview when users were shown the stimulus with the list of services and courses that librarians provided, some recalled having read somewhere about these services but, again, only superficially. None of the users interviewed had taken part in any of the courses mentioned, nor had they used the more informal services offered by the library. This was due to a lack of awareness of courses that would be of interest to the users, and the type of training offered: it was perceived as being too basic and, to a greater or lesser extent, in general it was training that users had already received.

> *"Yes, the basic computer course, but I think that they teach you very simple things that I already know how to do" (User, Female, 16-24, Spain)*

> *"It is because on the job hunting course... if I'm going to be told which websites to use or how to write a curriculum ... I know how to do this already" (User, Female, 25-39, Spain)*

6. Use of PACs for employment and business

Public libraries have a role to play not only in providing a community gateway to higher level skills – but also to employment, and therefore the role of the public library in helping Europeans access employment opportunities was a key theme within the research.

Around three in ten PAC users in Spain (31%) had used library computers in the last 12 months to support some employment related activity, similar to the EU average of 30%. This represents an estimated 0.3 million PAC users in Spain who had used PAC for employment related activity.

Overall, 10% of PAC users in Spain had used a PAC to apply for a job (either in Spain or in another EU country) in the last 12 months - this represents approximately 94,000 adults in Spain. Of those respondents who applied for a job through PAC, 15% said that they were successful. This means that in all 1% of PAC users in Spain – or an estimated 14,000 adults – applied for and got a job via a PAC in the last 12 months.

Public library staff have a role to play in supporting employment related PAC activities, as is shown in Figure 10; around one in thirteen (8%) of PAC users in Spain indicated that they had been shown or helped to do some employment-related PAC activity, somewhat below the EU average of one in nine (11%).

Figure 10: Employment related PAC activities carried out in last 12 months

Employment related activities - Used computers in last 12 months to...

%	Spain	EU
Any listed below	**31**	**30**
Find information about searching and/or applying for jobs	20	14
Search for jobs	15	13
Write a CV or covering letter	10	12
Improve skills needed in your current job	10	11
Apply for jobs in this country	10	10
Search for information about an employer	6	8
Find a recruitment company	7	5
Use spread sheet/data	2	3
Search for jobs in other EU countries	5	2
Apply for jobs in other EU countries	2	1

Employment related activities - Been shown / helped to... by library staff in the last 12 months

%	Spain	EU
Any listed below	**8**	**11**
Improve skills needed in your current job	3	4
How to write a CV	4	5
How to develop skills needed to obtain a job	2	2
How to look for a job online (such as finding a recruitment company, searching for information about an employer)	2	3
How to apply for a job online	2	2
How to look for and apply for jobs in other EU countries	*	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. Spain (713); EU (11716).

PAC users were asked whether they had used PACs for a range of business-related activities in the last 3 months. Around one in sixteen PAC users had used a PAC for participating in professional networks (6%, on a par with the EU average of 6%). Around three in ten (29%) had used a PAC for finding information related to a business they worked in, higher than the EU average of 20%, and a small minority for finding ways or places to sell their own products or goods (2% compared with the EU average of 4%).

The qualitative research found that ICT use in libraries has had a great impact on everything related to the labour market. In particular, many users reported having improved their skills for job hunting.

> *"I have learnt to write a good curriculum, to present better, without spelling mistakes..." (User, Male, 25-39, Spain)*

Libraries were useful for the unemployed to carry out activities which made them feel they had a certain routine and discipline and thus did not feel that they were wasting their time. Use of library ICT also helped to improve their chances of finding employment through the use of job search websites, for example. Considering the high unemployment rate in the country, the segment of the population who used this service was broadening but it was the lower class that made greater use of it since their training level was often very basic.

> *"It is true that many people already know where they have to look for a job, but some still don´t know all the possibilities that the Internet offers and these are usually the ones that have been unemployed for a longer period of time..." (Library Manager, Urban, Spain)*

An example of a user carrying out employment related activities in a library was a user of about 60 years of age in Madrid who ran guided tours in the city. She used to present her programme and other materials manually until she received Office training in the library and specifically Power Point training. Since then, she had been able to create more attractive presentations that increased business opportunities.

> *"This woman's experience was really positive... now you see her doing everything with Power Point, whilst before she was almost incapable of turning the computer on" (Library Manager, Urban, Spain)*

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 Spain is in line with the EU average. Two fifths (39%) of adults in Spain had used the internet in the last 12 months to interact with public authorities, compared with 41% across the EU. Nearly two fifths (37%) of citizens in Spain had used the Internet to obtain information from public authorities' web sites, compared with the EU average of 35%.

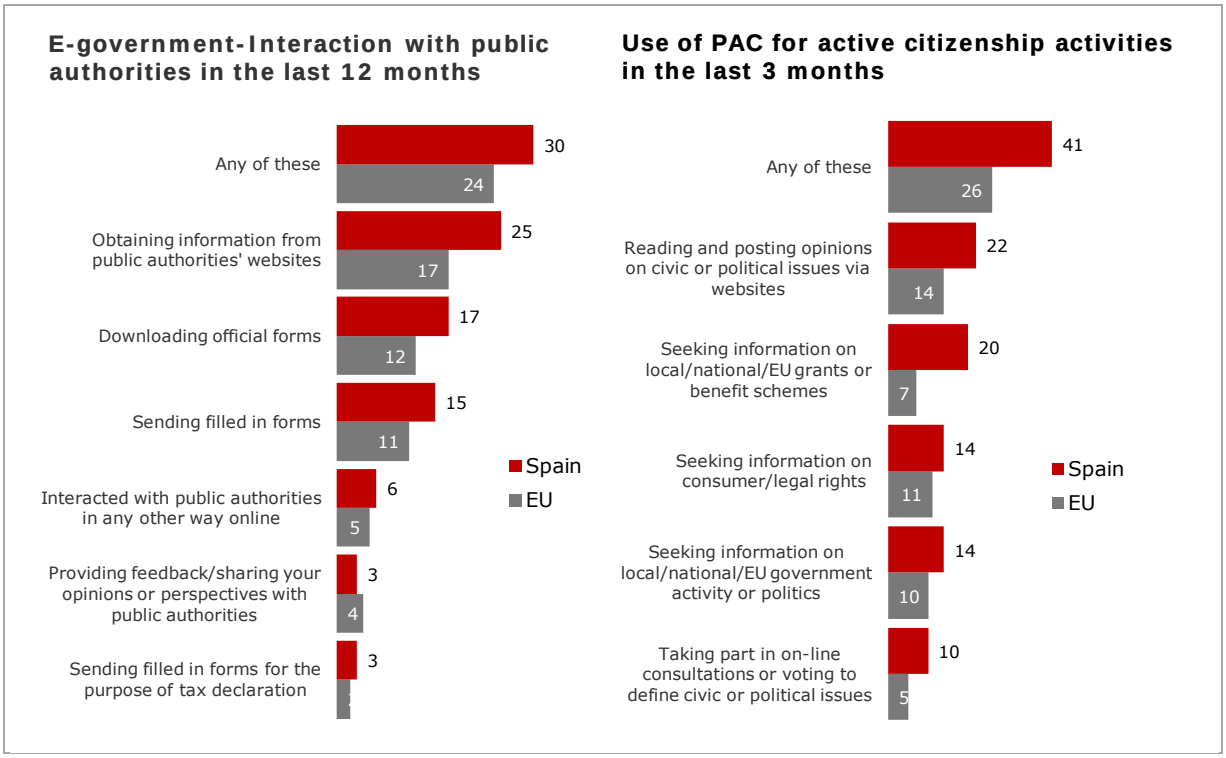
The library survey found that around three in ten PAC users in Spain (30%) had used PACs to interact with public authorities in the last 12 months, slightly higher than the EU average (24%), but somewhat lower than the Eurostat finding for all adults in Spain. The most common ways in which PAC users in Spain interacted with public authorities were to obtain information from public authorities' websites

(25%), downloading official forms (17%) and sending filled in forms (15%). In each case, these figures were somewhat higher than the proportions across the EU countries, but much lower than the Eurostat findings for all adults in Spain.

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, two fifths (41%) of PAC users in Spain had used PAC for engagement activities in the past 3 months, much higher than the average for users across the EU (26%). The two most common community engagement activities were reading and posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (22% Spain compared with 14% EU) and seeking information on local/national/EU grants or benefit schemes (20% Spain compared with 7% EU).

Figure 11: E-government-Interaction with public authorities in the last 12 months



Source: Library survey-C23 Did you interact with public authorities over the Internet using a computer at a public library for private purposes in the last 12 months for the following activities & C10 For which of the following activities have you used the Internet on computers in public libraries in the last 3 months...
Base: All PAC users. Spain (713); EU (11716)

The qualitative research found that libraries allowed users to access information and arrange certain issues with public bodies through ICT services. Although the training about this was not formally structured, information on how to use the internet provided by the library in Madrid gave examples on how to request information from public bodies.

"In the courses we give examples about how to request information from the registry, for example" (Library Manager, Urban, Spain)

The use of ICT in libraries was important in terms of administrative procedures, as users considered it to be much easier and quicker to undertake procedures with the administration than it had been previously.

"Before, if you had to obtain any official document, you had to go twenty places to get the information ... now you can do everything on the Internet" (User, Female, 25-39, Spain)

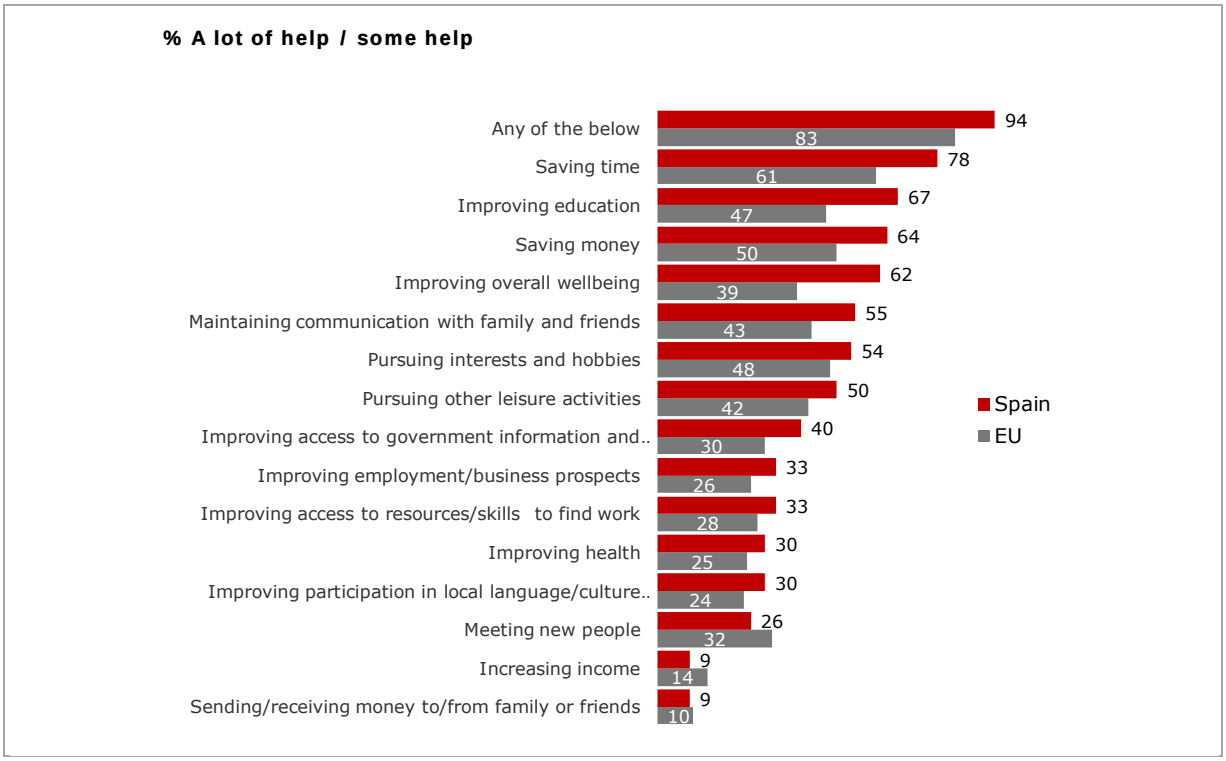
8. Impacts

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 nine in ten PAC users in Spain (94%) said that their PAC use had been helpful to them in at least one of the areas asked about, higher than the average across the EU (83%) and representing approximately 0.9 million people in Spain.

Figure 12 shows the proportions who said PAC use had been helpful in each area, within Spain 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- Spain (713); EU (11716).

PAC users in Spain were more likely than users across the EU to have found PAC use helpful for almost all of the areas asked about. As well as the general area of saving time (78% Spain, 61% EU), PAC use was rated as helpful in terms of improving education (67% Spain, 47% EU), 'improving overall wellbeing' (62% Spain, 39% EU), and across a range of leisure and social areas such as 'pursuing interests and hobbies' (54% Spain, 48% EU), 'pursuing other leisure activities' (50% Spain, 42% EU) and maintaining communication with family and friends (55% Spain, 43% EU). Just under two thirds (64%) of PAC users in Spain said PAC was helpful in saving money (higher than the EU average of 50%), which represents an estimated 0.6 million PAC users in Spain.

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

- 0.6 million people to improve their education
- 0.3 million people to improve their employment or business prospects
- 0.3 million people to improve their access to resources necessary to find work
- 0.1 million people to increase their income
- 0.4 million people to improve their access to government information services.

Qualitative research indicated that users were unable to spontaneously quantify how ICT in the library had impacted their or their friends´ lives: for them, the "effects" of ICT were too small to notice and was something that happened naturally. However, users perceived a great evolution from when then they first started using ICT to now. For example, if they initially visited a public library to check their email or to do small searches, they now accessed a greater number of services like keeping in touch with their family and friends through social media or performing a creative activity or retouching photos, having taught themselves so that they had become more comfortable in the ICT environment.

> *"I remember that in the beginning I used to come here to check my email ... Now I use social media, I can see how my friends are doing..." (User, Male, 40-65, Spain)*

When shown stimulus material in the interview users recalled anecdotes regarding the changes that the use of ICT has produced in their lives, the most significant being the increased contact with loved ones thanks to the use of social media.

> *"My father was adopted and he didn´t know if he had more family ... thanks to social media I was able to contact his brothers, my cousins and now we´re in touch, I talk to them when I come here, to the library" (Male, User, 25-39, Spain) "My brother met his partner on the Internet..." (User, Female, 40-65, Spain)*

As already discussed, ICT use in libraries also had a great impact on everything related to the labour market. In particular, many users recognize having improved their skills for job hunting.

Libraries were able to report impacts on specific user groups. For example the library in Peñaranda de Bracamonte reported some data suggesting that 90% of people over 55 years of age who participated in the project "EBook Territory" would be willing to buy an eBook.

> *"In the 55 age group, 90% said they would buy an e-book if the price were lower and 40% of those who participated in the project have continued reading eBooks" (Library Manager, Semi rural, Spain)*

More generally, the director of the library in Andorra commented on the positive impact that ICT had on the town: through a provincial literary contest organized online, in which participants uploaded their work onto the web, they received 700 entries from Spain and other countries, which helped to position a town as small as Andorra on the map.