PUBLIC LIBRARY VISITORS SURVEY– MOLDOVA 2014

Survey Results

December 2014

Chisinau 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Subject matter: This report provides an analysis of services provided by public libraries in Moldova, both those benefiting of Novateca program and those not under this program. Visitors of Novateca and NonNovateca entities assessed the impact these public libraries had on their quality of life.

Methodology: The study was conducted based on a nationally representative survey covering all rayons of the country (both rural and urban areas), with the exception of Transnistrian region, for each of the two target group. The target group were visitors aged 14 years and more of public libraries from Novateca network and outside Novateca network. A total number of 420 visitors of Novateca libraries and 409 visitors of NonNovateca libraries have been interviewed, using a probabilistic and random sampling scheme. The error margin for this sample size is ± 5.0%. Data were collected in December 2-20, 2014.

Main findings:
- Public libraries under the Novateca program register significantly higher share of regular visitors;
- Public libraries under the Novateca program provide wider range of services, including access to technologies, compare to other libraries;
- Digital technologies are as important to library clients as printed information;
- Younger clients use the library at the same rate as older ones; women seem to be more active compare to men; and rural residents more active compare to people residing in urban areas (probably because rural areas have considerably less education, leisure and entertainment opportunities compare to cities, and public library represents one of such opportunities);
- Public libraries are an important source of acquiring technology habits in terms of: physical manipulations of equipment (computers, fax machines, copy machines etc.); operating Microsoft Office applications; using internet for various purposes (communication, looking for information, accessing e-services etc.);
- Services provided by public libraries positively impact the quality of life of persons accessing these services: e.g. save time, strengthens communication and relationships between families and friends abroad, improves academic performance of students, increases qualification of (potential) employees, raises awareness of community members about community issues and increases their participation in community life etc.

Main conclusion: Modernization of libraries through widening the range of services provided lead to higher overall usage of library and consequently positively impacts the quality of people's life. The report concludes that Novateca libraries have more loyal and satisfied visitors, are highly valued by the public, but also prove significant positive impact at the individual and community level.

General recommendation: start /continue to invest in libraries infrastructure and human resources as these entities represent valuable resource centers at community level. It is recommended to replicate the Novateca program at the country level.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

Background information

Novateca is a program funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and administered by IREX Moldova.

Through a five-year national program, Novateca is providing Moldovan citizens with access to relevant information and modern, locally tailored services in public libraries to enrich their lives, drawing on technology tools and trained librarians who can guide them in this process.

In order to measure the impact that libraries have on users' lives across several key program areas, but also to monitor the progress of program Public Library Visitors Survey is to be carried out on an annual basis, starting with the current one.

Specifically, it is expected that survey will help to:
- facilitate the transformation of libraries with equipment and technology for free community access to information.
- strengthen the system of library professional development to enable over 1,500 librarians to provide citizen-focused, modern services at newly equipped libraries.
- foster communication and collaboration among leading librarians of different ranks and ages who serve as role models.
- empower librarians to work with national and local government officials to secure strategic prioritization and funding of public libraries to maximize their potential as venues for citizen engagement.
- increase public support for libraries as vibrant community centers by furthering partnerships with NGOs, citizens' groups and private sector entities

Results of the survey will provide information necessary for understanding the situation of public libraries and access to information in Moldova, and will provide information for potential advocacy campaigns for the Association of Librarians of Moldova (ALM) and other interested library partners.

Methodology and sample characteristics

Research method: nationally representative assessment survey.

Research technique: face-to-face interview with library visitors performed at the entrance of selected libraries, on the basis of structured questionnaires.

Target groups: library visitors aged 14 years and more:
- Target group one: visitors of libraries within Novateca Network
- Target group two: visitors of libraries outside Novateca Network

Sample size:
- Target group one: 420 respondents.
- Target group two: 409 respondents.

Research tools: written structured questionnaire. The working language was Romanian and Russian, depending of the respondent preference. 87% of questionnaires were conducted in Romanian language and 13% in Russian.

Questionnaire pre-test: Questionnaire was preliminary tested and finalized following the results of pre-test before multiplication.

Average length of interviews: 16 minutes.

Fieldwork period: December 2 – 20, 2014.

Distribution of data collection by day of week:

Day of week	Number	Per cent
Monday	85	10.3
Tuesday	111	13.4
Wednesday	101	12.2
Thursday	168	20.3
Friday	159	19.2
Saturday	78	9.4
Sunday	127	15.3
Total	**829**	**100**

Sample design

Sample characteristics:
- ➢ stratified – the following 2 stratification criteria were used:
  - *by region* – "X" regions similar to the administrative territorial units;
  - *by settlement* – villages, towns and municipalities;
- ➢ *strata volume* – the volumes of strata formed as a result of classification by regions and type of settlements include the number of registered users based on the official records for each public library.
- ➢ probabilistic – libraries are selected based on a probabilistic scheme, each one having a initial known non-zero probability to be included in the sample;
- ➢ multistage – in order to minimize the cost of the survey a multistage sample design is used:
  - *primary sampling unit (PSU) (library)* – the libraries from each stratum included in the sample are randomly selected with probability proportional to size (PPS) from each region.
  - *ultimate sampling unit (USU – respondent / library visitor)* – the respondents / library visitors is randomly selected, using a step approach. The step is differential by type and size of locality, as well as urban or rural.

Reference population: totality of library users. The information for sample design is based on the most recent official records about public library users, dated 2013.

Sampling frame: the list of all libraries. The sampling frame is different for each target group.

According to the list of libraries within Novateca Network, the total number of these libraries is 205 with a total registered of 126,896 users. While, there are registered in total 1,382 libraries in the country with a total number of 774,295 registered users.

Weighting procedure: The sample resulted from the fieldwork was weighted using the information from National Citizen Survey on the profile of people visiting public libraries. National Citizen Survey targeted general population and was carried out in about similar period as Public Library Visitors Survey. Weighting procedure was applied mainly because within methodology of Public Library Visitors Survey visitors who come to libraries more often are more likely to be interviewed, while those with lower frequency are less likely. Sample from Public Library Visitors Survey was weighted by gender and age groups up to the middle difference value between the two surveys, due to the fact that National Citizen Survey underrepresented population from urban areas and overrepresented young group of population comparing to official statistical data. But also because certain age groups of library visitors sub-sample from the National Citizen Survey were too small and less relevant statistically due to the overall size of sample of 400 respondents.

Difficulties encountered / lessons learned

The following difficulties and lessons learned were faced during the fieldwork:
- The daily flow of visitors is very low in rural areas, but also in rayonal centers. The real number of visitors is far from the reported number by libraries. This made difficult to use step approach in case of all libraries. In order to solve this issue interviewers visited respondent at home. Respondents were selected from library registers using step procedure. Librarians assisted CIVIS interviewers to identify selected visitors.
- It was also discovered for some libraries, especially in rural areas, that registers are old and includes also people registered long time ago, which actually even do not visit library.
- One important lesson learned was visitors who come to libraries more often are more likely to be interviewed, while those with lower frequency are less likely. This impacted the age and maybe gender of resulted profile of respondents. It seems that young people, especially students, create the main group of library visitors, but many of them also visit library more often due to their educational responsibilities. In order to avoid situation with low presence of elder groups of visitors, it was slightly balanced with quota procedure.
- The low flow of visitors, especially, in rural areas is also due to the cold season, when many public libraries are not heated. In these cases, libraries are either closed or open for a couple of hours during the day or opened upon request of individual visitors. Due to these barriers, it is advised to conduct the fieldwork for the next waves in warm seasons – autumn or spring.

However, generally, the survey was well perceived by both interviewers and respondents, due to the interested topic.

Librarians were very polite and provided necessary support to interviewers. Some of librarians even came from their annual leave, because there was nobody to replace them in the library.

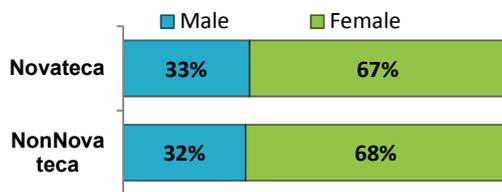## Socio-demographic profile of respondents
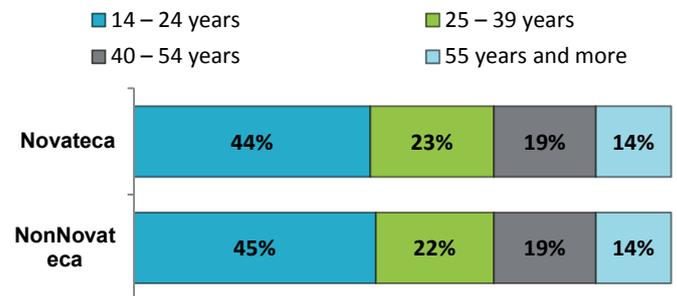
Figure 1. Gender profile

	Male	Female
Novateca	33%	67%
NonNovateca	32%	68%

Figure 2. Age profile

Legend: 14 – 24 years, 25 – 39 years, 40 – 54 years, 55 years and more

	14 – 24 years	25 – 39 years	40 – 54 years	55 years and more
Novateca	44%	23%	19%	14%
NonNovateca	45%	22%	19%	14%

Figure 3. Level of education

Legend: Novateca, NonNovateca

	Novateca	NonNovateca
Primary	12%	10%
Gymnasium	19%	18%
Secondary	8%	10%
Lyceum	9%	9%
Vocational school	12%	10%
Technical	17%	15%
University	22%	24%
Master / PhD	1%	4%
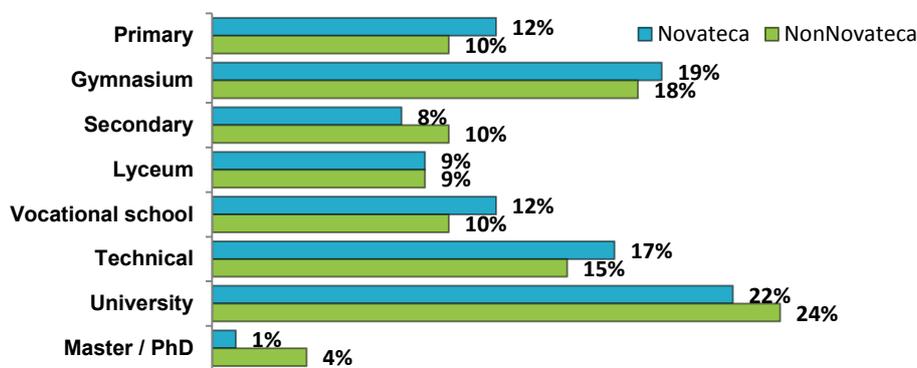
Figure 4. Employment status

	Novateca	NonNovateca
Employed	39%	36%
Housewife / family care	3%	4%
Retired or disabled	8%	9%
Unemployed, looking for the job	8%	6%
Unemployed, not looking for the job	2%	3%
Temporarily I am not working, but I will engage when will start next season	1%	1%
Student/Pupil	38%	40%
Other	1%	1%
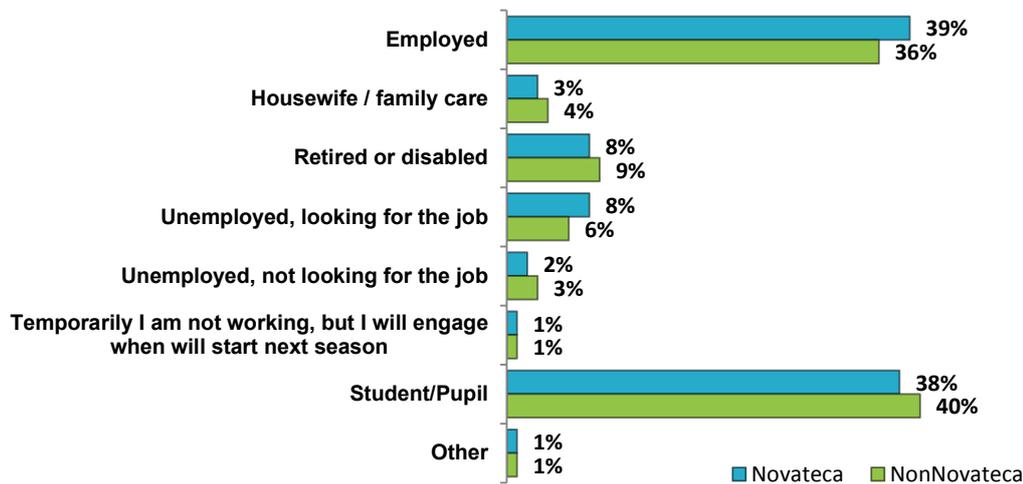
Figure 5. Health status (disability)

Legend: Yes, No

	Yes	No
Novateca	2%	98%
NonNovateca	4%	96%

Figure 6. Access to technologies at home

Figure 7. Ethnicity

OVERAL STATUS AND PERCEPTIONS

Frequency of visits at public library
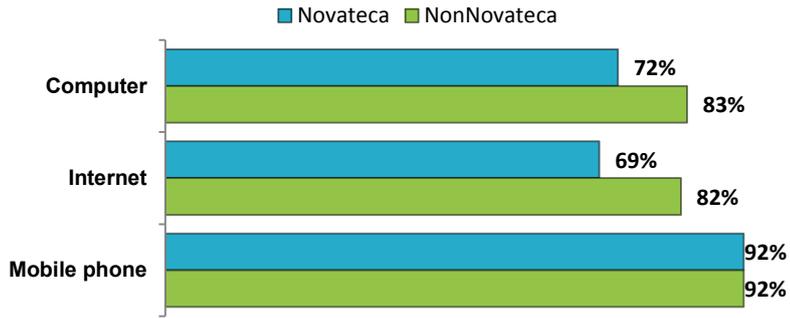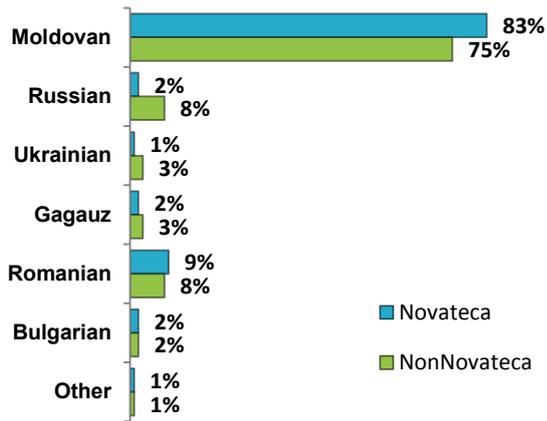
Novateca clients visit public libraries significantly more often compare to NonNovateca users – Figure 8. Thus, most visitors of Novateca libraries (2/3) go regularly to public libraries (more than once per week or about once a week), while NonNovateca visitors are rather sporadic users of public libraries. The comparative advantage of Novateca libraries consists of benefitting of technology tools, of trained librarians who can guide visitors in accessing relevant information and modern services in public libraries, and a range of various non-traditional services provided by the libraries.

Figure 8. Frequency of visits at public library (%)
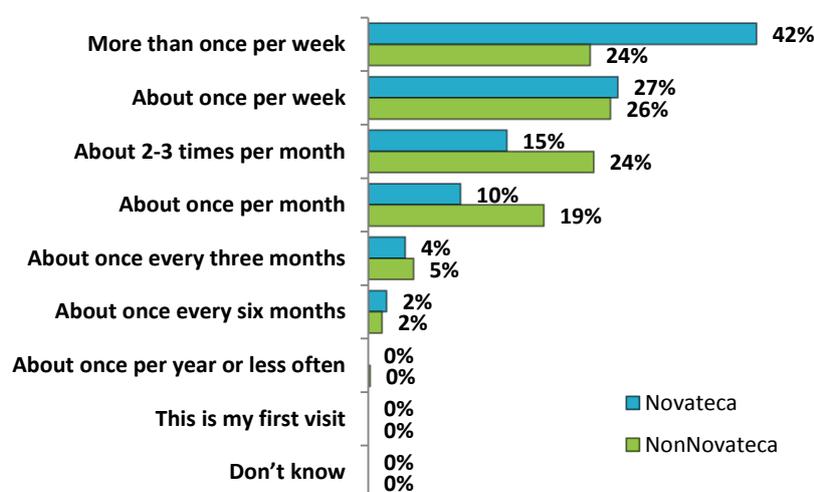
Among Novateca users going to public libraries *regularly* prevail people from rural area (74%), from Northern region (76%), lower educated (74%), aged more than 40 years (72%). The profile of NonNovateca regular visitors is similar with Novateca visitors, but at a lower scale.

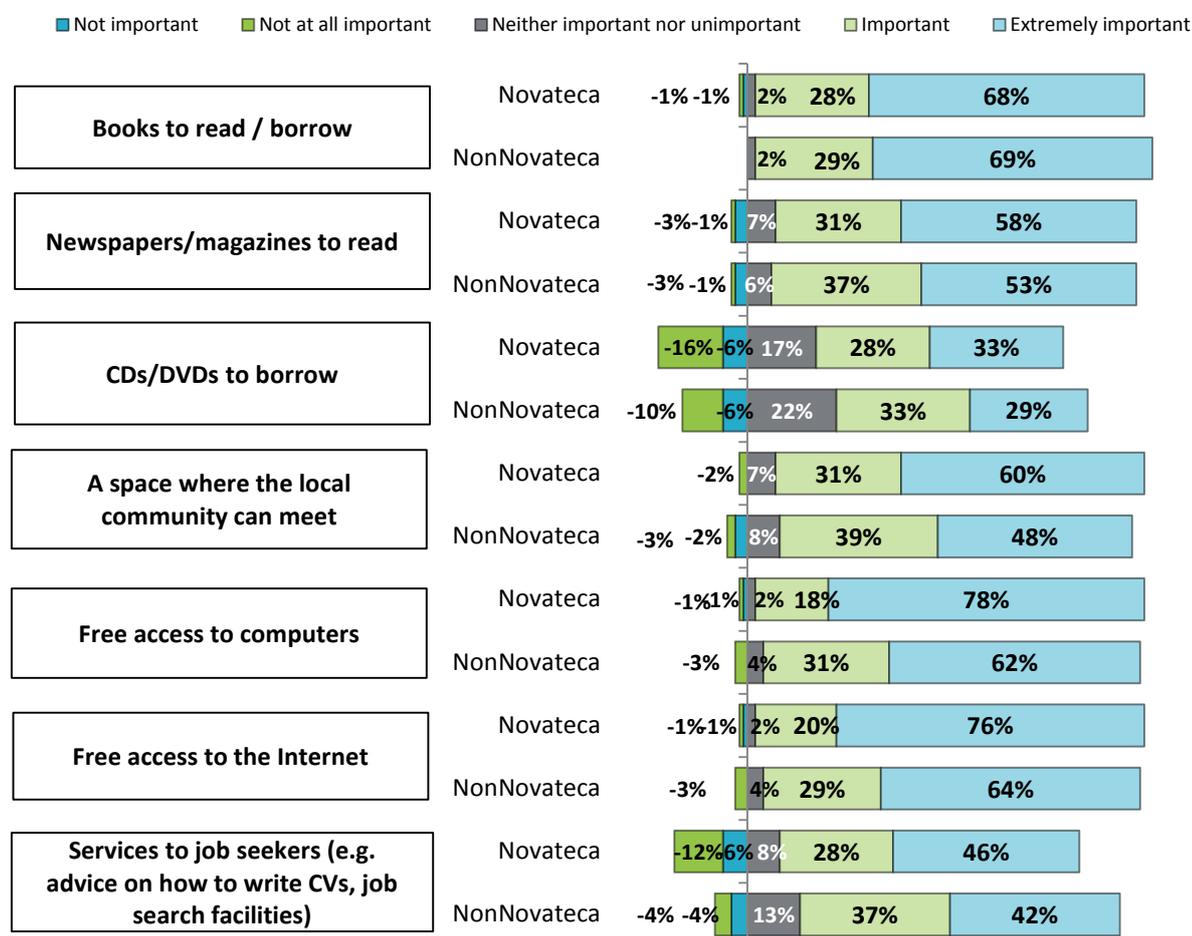Sample: 420 Novateca respondents and 409 NonNovateca respondents
Q1. How often do you go to public library?

Perception of importance of services a public library should provide

Currently a public library in Moldova could provide a wide range of services, namely printed information sources, staff expertise, technologies and a place where community can meet. For most people accessing all these services at libraries are important / extremely important. Nevertheless, if placing the types of services on a scale, technologies (access to computer and internet, and availability of photocopiers / printers) seem to be most important. These are followed by printed information sources (books to read / borrow; school books and books for children; study materials for adults; newspapers / magazines to read; other information). As for the expertise insured by the libraries' personnel, it is more important in terms of computer skills training, and less important in terms of obtaining business-related information, information about government services or in terms of finding / applying for a job. At the same time, respondents (especially Novateca users) perceive public libraries as a place where community members can meet, socialize and collaborate. They highly appreciate the events organized within the library (exhibitions, meetings with book authors, chess and checker tournaments, meetings with foreign delegations, events for elder people and for pupils etc.).

The data to prove these statements is presented in Figures 9a and 9b. Another observation based on these two figures is that each service is appreciated at a higher scale by Novateca users (compare to NonNovateca ones). It can be assumed that this difference in scale of perception is due to different experiences these two categories of respondents had with the libraries. Or, the Novateca program

Figure 9a. Importance of various services to be available in a public library (I)

Sample: 420 Novateca respondents and 409 NonNovateca respondents
Q2. How important is for these services to be available in a public library?

transformed traditional public libraries into a modern, locally tailored service, with an important impact on community members' quality of life (the benefits will be presented further in the report).

Figure 9b. Importance of various services to be available in a public library (II)

■ Not important ■ Not at all important ■ Neither important nor unimportant ■ Important ■ Extremely important
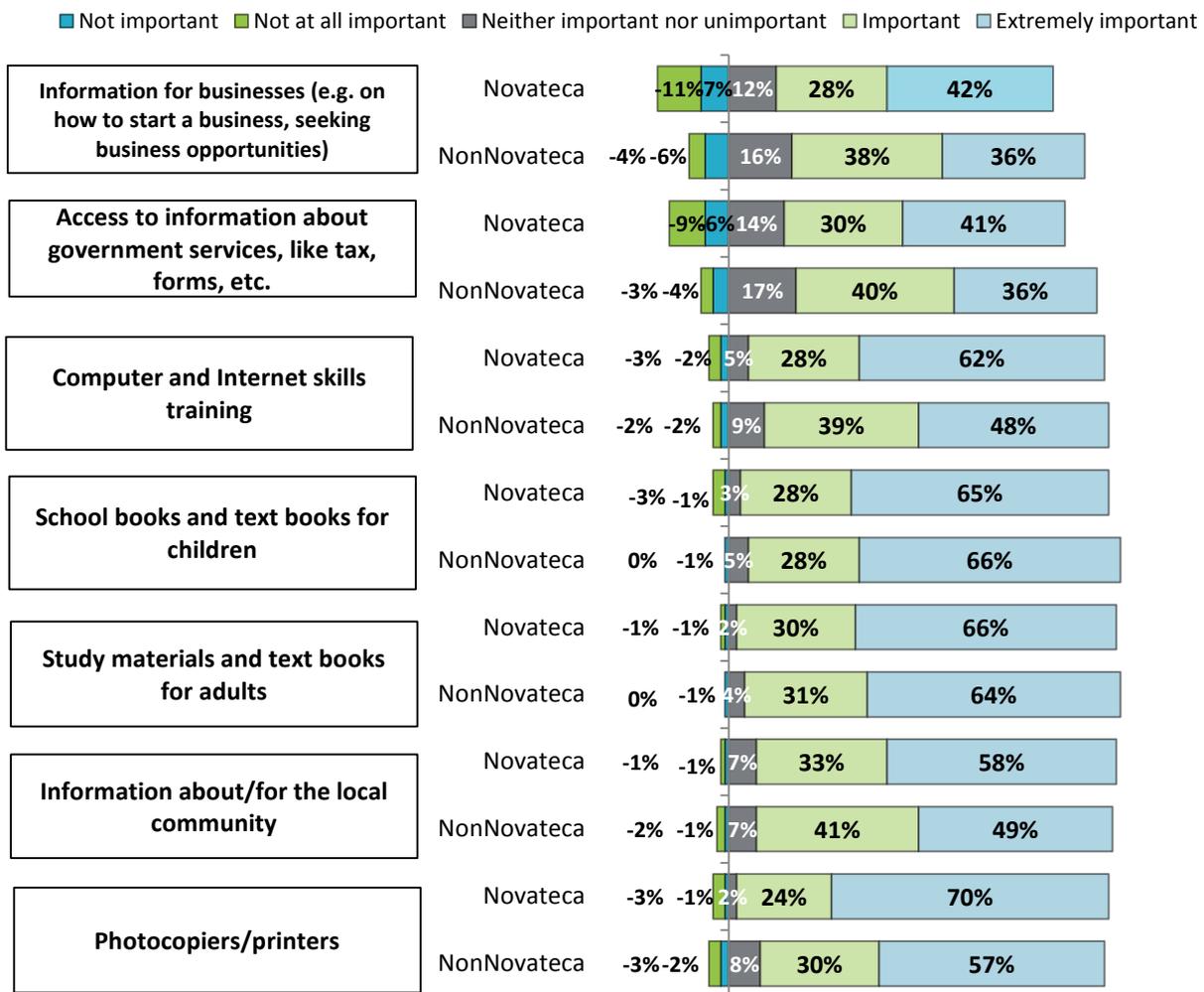

Sample: 420 Novateca respondents and 409 NonNovateca respondents
Q2. How important is for these services to be available in a public library?

Even if most respondent rated most services as important or very important, some differences in perceptions can be noted for specific social and demographic variables. Women, rural residents and those with higher level of education seems to be more interested in the wide range of public library services, including access to technologies (computer and internet), comparing with urban residents, men and lower educated people.

Services accessed during the last 12 months

Besides perceptions about the importance and availability of each service in a public library, the actual behavior of respondents has been measured. It shows that yet prevail use of traditional services provided by a public library. Thus, almost all respondents who went to a library during the last 12 months either browsed / read books or newspapers (93% each – Novateca and NonNovateca users) or borrowed / renewed books or other materials on electronic format (80% of Novateca and 81% of NonNovateca users) – Figure 10.

Use of various technologies (computer, Internet through the library's Wi-Fi, photocopier or a fax machine) is the second type of services performed by visitors to public libraries, but primarily by Novateca

Figure 10. Activities performed in a public library during the last 12 months (%)
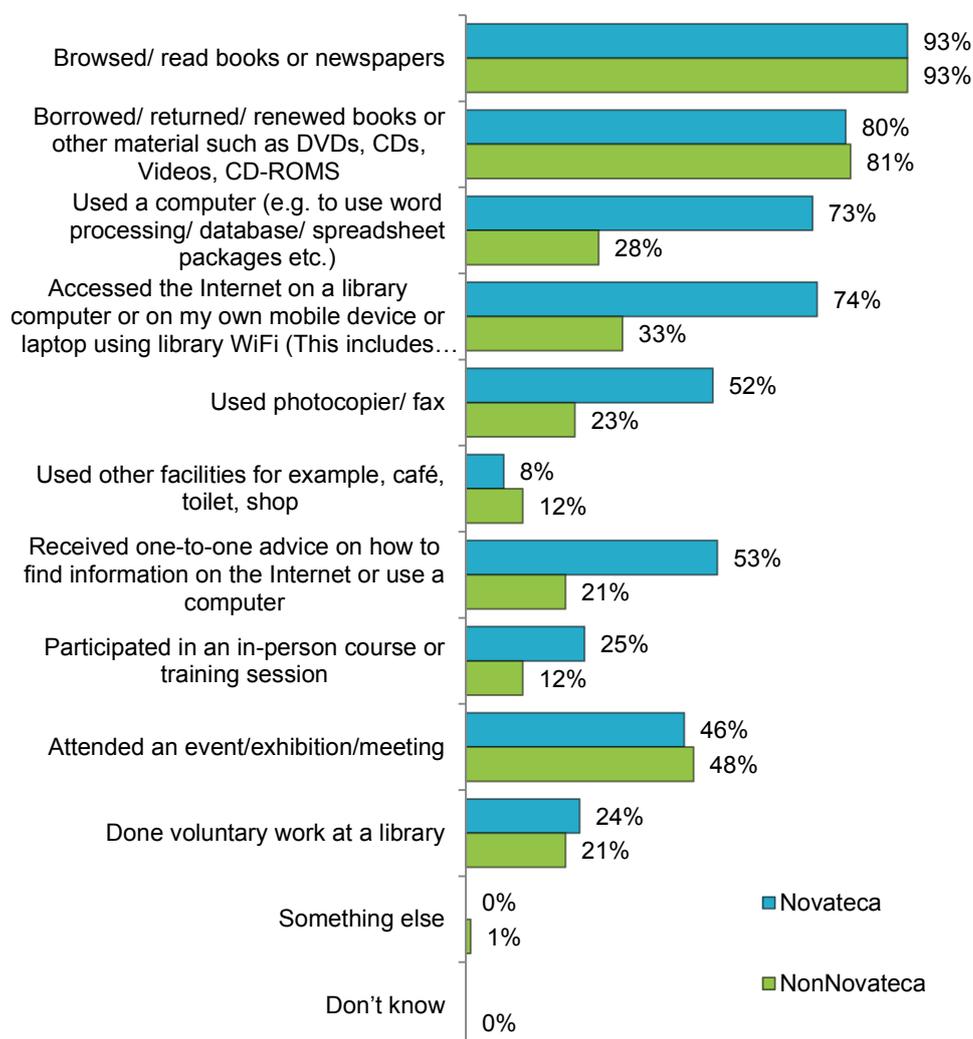
Sample: 420 Novateca respondents and 409 NonNovateca respondents
Q3. Have you performed the following activities in a public library during the last 12 months?

clients. The share of NonNovateca users accessing technologies is considerably lower – Figure 10. The main reason is probably lack / insufficiency of these technologies in NonNovateca libraries. In this context, visitors of Novateca libraries benefited to a higher extent of individual consultations on internet and computer usage.

Libraries also offer new recreation and entrepreneurial opportunities such as attending an event / exhibition / meeting organized inside the public library (almost half respondents of both categories).

USE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY AT PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Use of Internet

Generally people accessed internet for the first time either at home, at school and at work, or in a public library. Most people (both categories) used internet at home for the first time – Figure 11. These are predominantly people from urban area (as urban area insures better / higher internet access), from South, women, people with low and average level of education.

Figure 11. First experience of using Internet (%)

Every fifth Novateca client used internet for the first time in a public library (predominantly those from rural area, of an older age, female, with low and average level of education, who visit public library often / very often). Public library was chosen considerably less by NonNovateca beneficiaries to use internet for the first time – 7%. These were predominantly urban residents, living in the Centre, people of an older age, female, with low and average level of education, people who often go to a library. This could be explained by the lack of / low-speed internet connection in

Sub-sample: 339 Novateca respondents and 157 NonNovateca respondents who use computer at the library
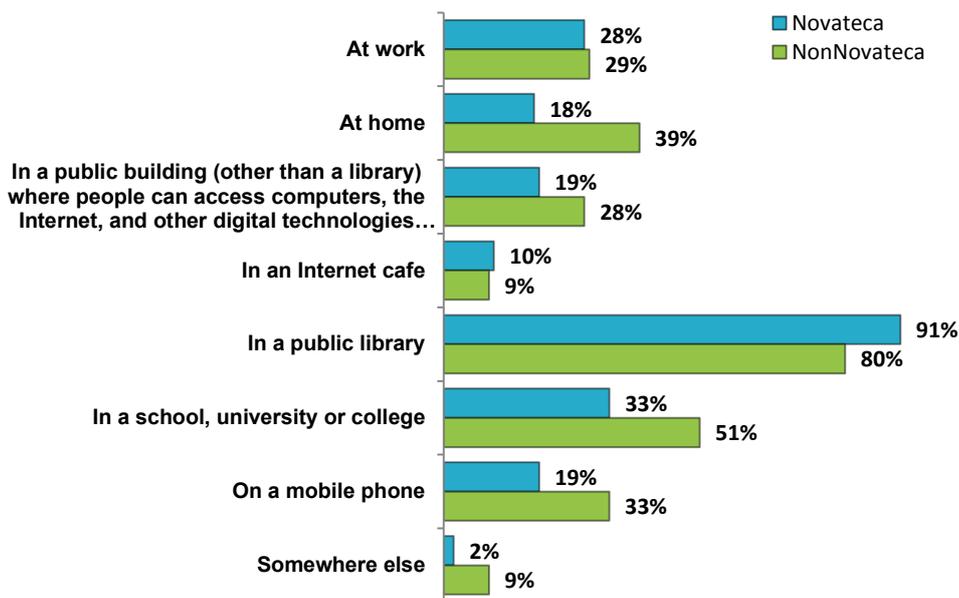**Q4. The first time I ever used Internet was …?**

NonNovateca libraries, which according to NonNovateca respondents is one of the most often stated problems these libraries face. Another problem would be insufficient number of computers per person to be used.

Figure 12. Places where Internet can be accessed at no charge (%)

Free internet can be accessed everywhere – at home, at work, in a public building, in a public library, Internet café, school or university etc. However, most often stated place is public library – Figure 12.

Sub-sample: 339 Novateca respondents and 157 NonNovateca respondents who use computer at the library

Q5. I can access the Internet at no charge in the following locations: (multiple choices)?

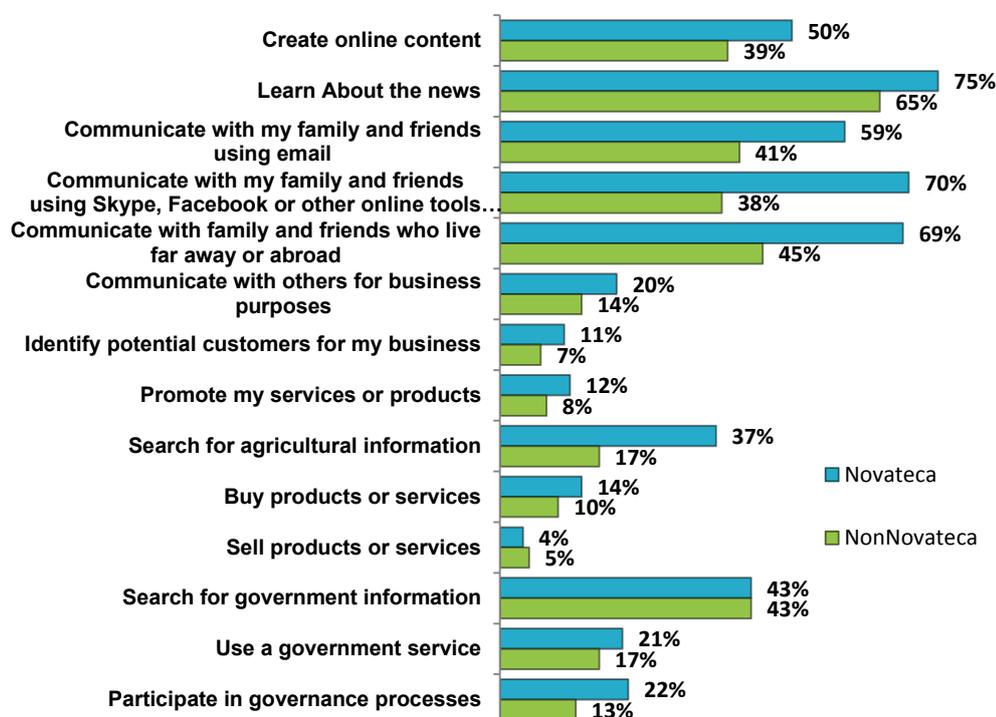## Technology used at the public library during the last 12 months

Technologies available at public libraries are used for different purposes – Figure 13. Most often people use Internet for news updates, but also for communication. E-mail, Skype or social media is highly used to communicate with family members and friends. Respondents believe that digital tools provided by public libraries induce a stronger bond with relatives and friends (especially with those abroad). Thus, respondents communicate more often (92% of Novateca users and 72% of NonNovateca clients) and feel more connected (89% of Novateca users and 74% of NonNovateca clients) to their family and friends due to these digital opportunities. This *advantage* has been mentioned in particular by people residing in rural area, women, respondents aged over 55. Actually, the proportion of elder visitors of public libraries using internet for communication purpose exceed the proportion of younger visitors.

Another form of communication is creating an online content (e.g., posting on a wall or comment board, blogging, updating an online profile, uploading photos, designing websites or web content) which is also used quite often (Figure 6), mainly be young people, aged 16-24.

Although to a lower extent, digital services are also used for obtaining information about and for getting involved in various government / governance-related issues. Some respondents took benefit of digital services: 7% of Novateca users and 4% of NonNovateca users could receive money, subsidies or support owed to them by the government. Most important advantage, however, is the time saving. Thus, 95% of Novateca and 88% of NonNovateca users saved time for government / governance-related issues due to digital tools provided by public libraries.

Technology is less used for business-related purposes such as communicating with (potential) business partners and/or clients, identifying potential customers, promoting services or products. Some of public libraries clients use digital services to buy and sell products or services.

Figure 13. Technology used at the public library during the last 12 months (%)

Sub-sample: 339 Novateca respondents and 157 NonNovateca respondents who use computer at library
Q6. I have used technology (e.g., WiFi, Internet, computers, Facebook, Skype) at the public library in the last 12 months to: (only affirmative answers)

The data presented in Figure 13 also shows that Novateca beneficiaries are generally more active in using technologies provided by public libraries compare to NonNovateca beneficiaries.

Irrespective the purpose of accessing technology provided by public libraries, the majority of users mentioned they (Figure 14):
• saved money due to digital tools provided (e.g., saving on technology and communication costs by using Wi-Fi or Skype; saving on travel costs by purchasing goods or completing government forms online as the prices are cheaper online);
• got more aware of civic and community activities due to digital tools provided (e.g., activities of local associations or neighborhood groups, volunteer activities, rallies);
• had read more due to digital tools provided.

The share of respondents citing these benefits is significantly higher among Novateca users compare to NonNovateca users.

Figure 14. Benefits out of technology provided by public libraries (%)
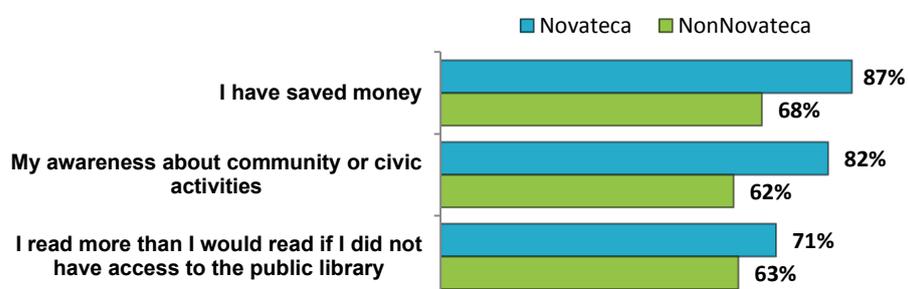
Sub-sample: 339 Novateca respondents and 157 NonNovateca respondents who use computer at library
Q7. Do you agree with the following statements - Because of technology (e.g., Wi-Fi, Internet, computers, Facebook, e-books) at the public library? (affirmative answers only)
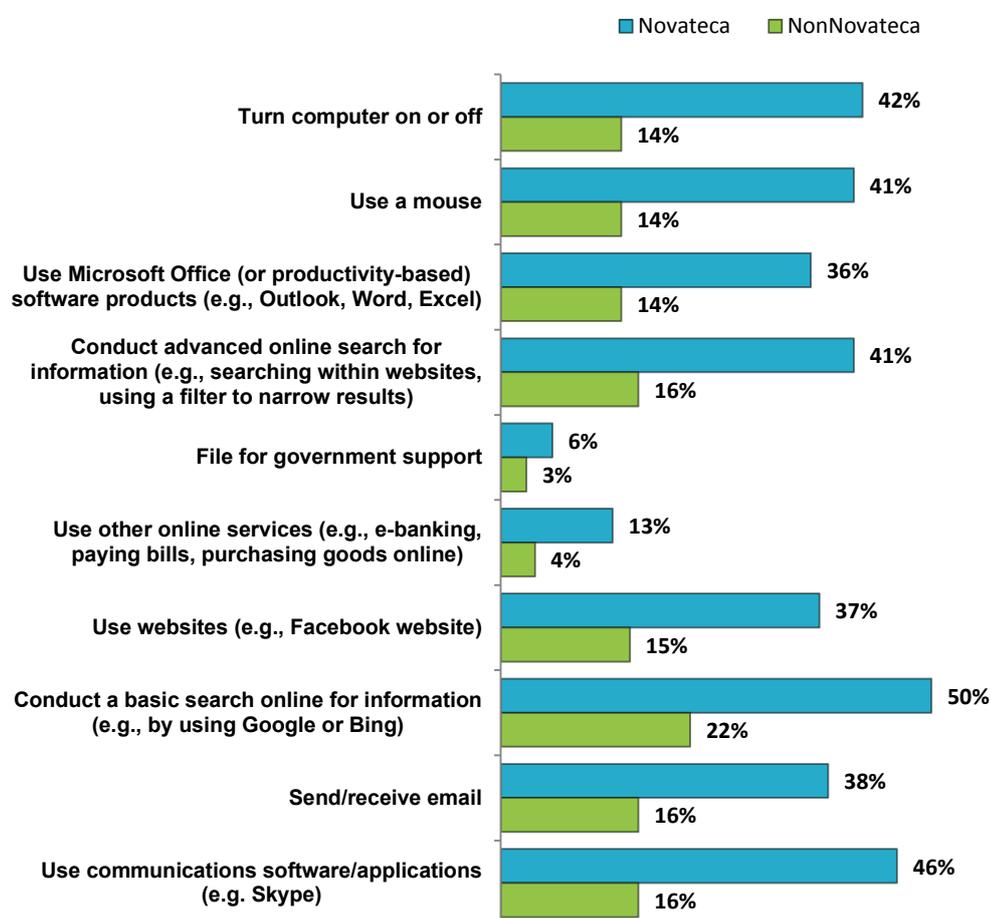
SERVICES PROVIDED BY PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Benefits of assistance provided by the library staff or outside experts

As a result of assistance provided by the public library staff or outside experts, respondents acquired different skills – Figure 15. Some of them started with initial technical manipulations, such as turning the computer on or off, using a mouse. Other clients got abilities in using Microsoft Office software products. However, most people have been guided in learning how to use Internet for various purposes:

- to a greater extent – online searching for information; sending and receiving e-mails; using communication software / applications (e.g. Skype); using social media (e.g., Facebook);
- to a lower extent – using online services such as e-banking, paying bills, purchasing goods; applying for state financial assistance.

Figure 15. Knowledge / skills acquired due to assistance provided by the library staff or outside experts (%)

Sample: 420 Novateca respondents and 409 NonNovateca respondents
Q8. As a result of public library services (e.g., training or assistance from library staff or outside experts), I learned to? (positive answers only)

The share of skills acquired due to assistance provided by public libraries is significantly higher among the responses of Novateca users compare to NonNovateca users – Figure 15. The benefits from assistance to use technologies was registered mainly in rural areas and among females. In terms of age groups, all categories benefited of more or less same level of support from the library staff.

Benefits of services provided by the public library

As previously mentioned, public library currently provides a variety of services: technology, venue for events, trainings and assistance on behalf of library staff etc. Due to services provided by the public library many people believe they use technology to a higher extent and are more involved in their community lives than if they would not have access to the public library. The profile of these people is mainly rural residents, people living in the Centre and South, those aged 14-39. However, the share of Novateca users among those mentioning these benefits is higher compare to NonNovateca users – Figure 16.

Figure 16. Benefits out of technology and assistance provided by the public libraries (%)
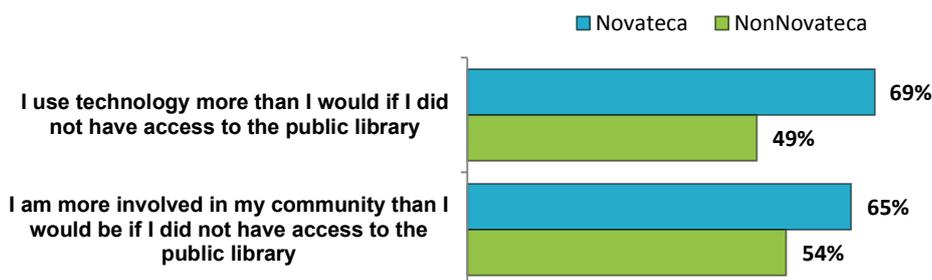
Sample: 420 Novateca respondents and 409 NonNovateca respondents
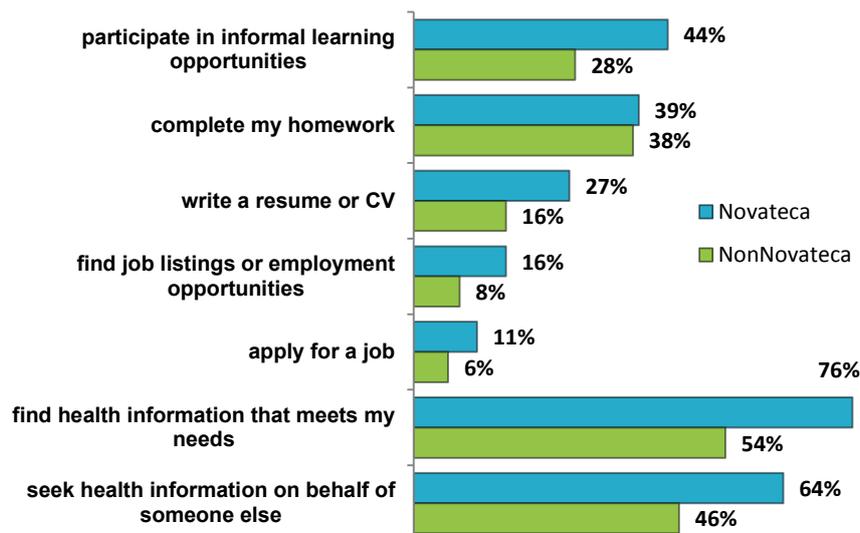Q9. Do you agree with the following statement – Because of services provided by the public library (e.g., access to computers, Internet, WiFi, or other technology; assistance or training from library staff)? (only affirmative answers)

Purposes the public library services were used for during the last 12 months

Besides reading books, newspapers and communication, people access public libraries' services for many other purposes (see Figure 17). In this regard, during the last 12 months most people looked for health information (either to meet their personal needs or on behalf of others). Novateca users accessed public libraries for this purpose to a significantly higher extent compare to NonNovateca users. Health information included various aspects: symptoms, medical treatment, medical service providers, diet, nutrition, fitness etc. Finally, it had benefits both for service users themselves (as the information found made them decide about their

Figure 17. During the last 12 months, I have used public library services to… (%)
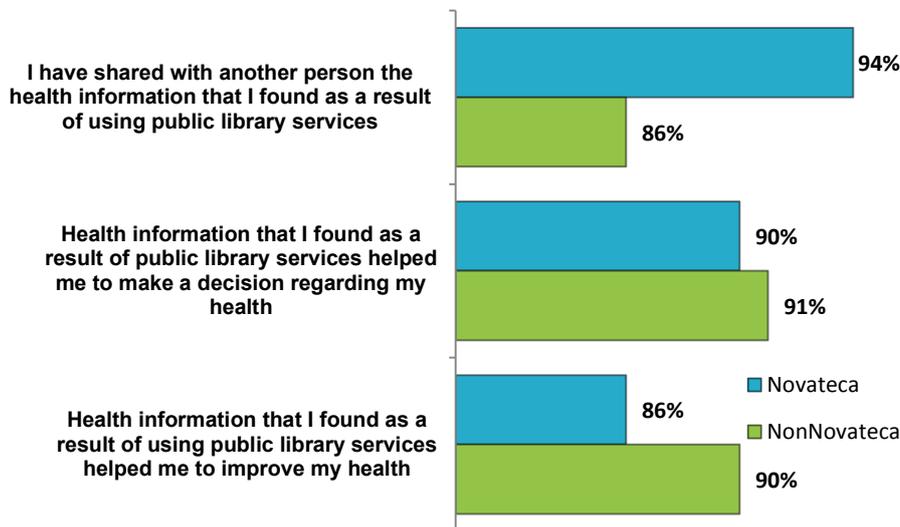

Sample: 420 Novateca respondents and 409 NonNovateca respondents
Q10. I have used public library services (e.g., technology, physical space for meetings or study sessions, informal training or assistance by library staff or external experts) in the last 12 months to…? (only affirmative answers)

health condition and / or improved their health condition), and for other people (as the information found due to service provided by the library was disseminated among other people) – Figure 17a. Respondents residing in North and Centre, rural area, women, people aged 40 and more have mentioned these benefits in particular.

Figure 17a. Benefits of health information for library users and for others (%)

Subsample: 325 Novateca respondents and 230 NonNovateca respondents who used public library services to find health information for themselves or for someone else Q10c, 10d, 10e. Do the following statements fit your experience?

Besides health related issues, people used library service during the last 12 months for learning purposes (homework and accessing informal learning opportunities) – Figure 17. As regard informal learning opportunities, Novateca libraries are far advanced in providing this facility as compared with libraries outside the Novateca network.

As for the other general purpose – employment – public library services are rarely used (Figure 17). The employment related issues refer to writing a CV, looking for a job opportunity, and applying for a job. As regard to writing a CV, visitors of Novateca libraries are more likely to visit libraries for this specific purpose. It might be due to support and advice on CV writing from library staff. Employment related services provided in public libraries seems to have a certain positive impact. Almost one-third (37%) of Novateca respondents and 17% of NonNovateca respondents who used public library services to find a job, finally were employed. These were predominantly people residing in Center, urban area, aged 40-54.

Benefits of using public library services in terms of qualification, academic performance, earnings, business opportunities, and agricultural income

According to survey results, students are most impacted by the services they access at public libraries. 73% of Novateca users and 56% of NonNovateca users consider their academic performance improved. They are followed by job seekers: 39% of Novateca users and 25% of NonNovateca users believe they are better qualified after using the library services – Figure 18.

For other categories (employees, business owners and farmers) using public library has generally not impacted their situation. Only a small share of these respondents (both categories) consider their earning increased, business has grown and agricultural income rose due to accessing library's services – Figure 18.

Figure 18. Benefits of using public library services in terms of qualification, academic performance, earnings, business opportunities, and agricultural income (%)
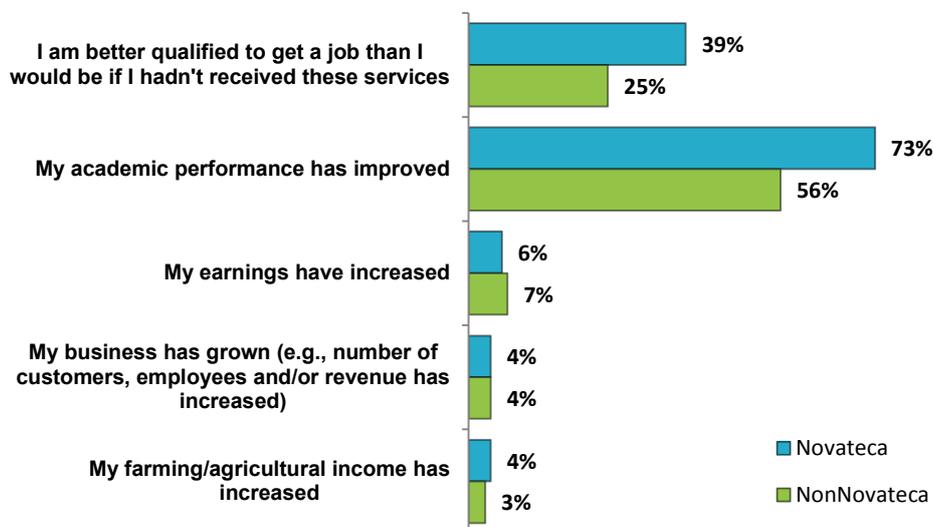
Sample: 420 Novateca respondents and 409 NonNovateca respondents
Q11. Do you agree with the following statement?

The survey also offered the possibility to respondents (through open-ended questions) to express their feeling about public libraries and provide recommendations in order to improve this community service. Thus, Novateca users were generally (very) satisfied with the public library, with services provided, and with the library staff. They expressed different benefits gained due to the library. The benefits were mentioned in terms of personal and professional growth, in terms of socialization opportunity, in terms of moral satisfaction and wellbeing etc. Some of these quotes are presented below:

- *Our library is a very good one and it corresponds to the highest standards.*
- *The librarians are very polite, sociable and truly dedicated to their work. They are real professionals. I go to the library with pleasure.*
- *It is an opportunity for me. It allows me to get informed and to have deeper knowledge compare to may work colleagues.*
- *I am very happy to have a library in my village. I come here to ease loneliness, I feel yet necessary to society.*
- *I improved my school grades due to the library.*
- *It is a very salutary place for children and youth. It is a place where we learn innovation, rest, relax. The youth comes to the library very often and avoid the helter-skelter lifestyle*

As for the recommendations provided, these were related most often to:
- Equipment supply: equipping the library with (more) computers, printer, copy machine, projector, camera (video and photo)
- Diversify services: create a video-audio library with information from Discovery and National Geographic channels; provide e-books, CDs and DVDs; digitize the library catalogs; insure access to electronic libraries; provide more trainings on diverse topics (e.g., advanced computer skills, trainings for elder people etc.); create a network of all the libraries in the country; various lending book related services (all books to be lent, special lending conditions for permanent visitors, extend lending time on-line); rooms for children, to motivate them from an early childhood to come to the library; create opportunities for elder people
- Entertainment: opening a café in the library, create extracurricular opportunities for pupils

- <u>Makerspace:</u> promote public library as a makerspace for community members, where conferences, roundtables, workshops and other events could be organized, especially as the library is very well equipped to offer these services
- <u>Accessibility:</u> ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities
- <u>Promote libraries:</u> use mass-media, e-mail to inform people about libraries

On the other side, NonNovateca users mostly mentioned the problems their libraries encounter and came with recommendations to improve it. Based on respondents' answers, most NonNovateca libraries are placed in old buildings, with small spaces, with a stringent need to be repaired, with electricity and heat problems, and obsolete furniture. These libraries very often lack any equipment. Very often no internet connection or poor internet connection is insured. Libraries have insufficient and/or outdated printed material, lots of the existing material is in Cyrillic script. The library staff lacks professionalism. The work schedule is limited to few hours per day or even per week. Therefore, several recommendations (in addition to those made by Novateca users (see above)) have been provided by respondents:

- <u>Repairs:</u> repair the building / rooms, install new doors and windows, equip with new furniture, repair toilets, modernize the lightening system, heat the spaces
- <u>Literature supply:</u> supply with new and modern printed material, with material in Romanian language and in Latin script, supply with Encyclopedias and Dictionaries, newspapers and journals; with foreign literature and specific material (on arts, medicine, health, psychology, economy, accountancy, astrology, sport etc.); bestsellers; with teaching materials and school books.
- <u>Internet:</u> to insure internet connection (where no Internet is provided), to speed up the Wi-Fi and the internet connection, provide free internet;
- <u>Human resources:</u> to increase the professionalism of the library staff, to increase their salary
- <u>Time schedule:</u> the library to work full time, not only a few hours per day / week; adjust time for pupils

Summarizing respondents' comments and suggestions, the most often stated suggestions common for both target groups refer to better access to modern technologies (enough number of computers, good speed of Internet etc.), as well as improvement of literature stock.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusion of this report is that Novateca proved to be a highly valued program, which should be replicated at national level.

Novateca public libraries represent a source of space, access, staff, digital and printed materials, knowledge, and connections that can improve the well-being of community members and support their development.

Due to Novateca program public libraries become many-sided community centers, very often the only community asset (especially in rural area and for low-income citizen). Libraries' shift to offering a wide range of digital, educational, social and entrepreneurial tools lead to higher overall usage of the library.

A public library contributes to the economic wellbeing of community members: e.g., free access to technologies and assistance provided by library staff in looking for employment-related information and in applying for a job, helped people to find jobs, thereby increasing their individual and family income *(37% Novateca users and 17% NonNovateca users got employed; every 10th Novateca and NonNovateca user increased their income)*. Free access to technologies provided by public libraries saved people's money *(87% Novateca users and 68% NonNovateca users)*. The business of 4% of respondents (each category) grew.

Public libraries can **strengthen and unite their communities** as it raises awareness about community issues and civic participation *(82% Novateca users and 628% NonNovateca users);* provides makerspace and socialization services, e.g., venue and equipment to organize workshops, conferences, roundtables and other events *(46% Novateca users and 48% NonNovateca users)*; café, shop service etc. *(8% Novateca users and 12% NonNovateca users)*. It also gets people (especially elders) out of isolation.

Technologies available at public libraries are highly used to communicate with family members and friends, who leads to **stronger bond with relatives and friends** (*92% of Novateca users and 72% of NonNovateca clients feel more connected to their family and friends abroad).*

They have the potential to offer development services (e.g., skills training) and to provide for the **life-long learning** *(25% Novateca users and 12% NonNovateca users participated in in-person or training session)*.

It is a useful place for pupils to be during out-of-school hours, as it improves their **academic performance** *(73% Novateca users and 56% NonNovateca users)*.

Proper equipment provided to a library, digitization of services, makerspace opportunities, training opportunities and other services **start to change the perception** that the library typically is a place of books.

The report highlights a comparative advantage of Novateca libraries, as they benefit of technology tools, of qualified human resources who can guide clients in accessing relevant information and modern services, and of a range of non-traditional services provided. Therefore, Novateca public libraries are visited more often and are better assessed by respondents. The share of Novateca respondents stating

benefits out of using library services is higher compare to NonNovateca users. The share of respondents showing satisfaction with the services is also higher among Novateca clients.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The general recommendation is to scale-up successful practices to maximize the impact of the program (where it is implemented) and to replicate this model at the country level.

Some specific recommendations refer to:
- Equipping the library with (more) computers, printer, copy machine, projector, camera (video and photo);
- Insure internet connection (where no Internet is provided), speed up the Wi-Fi and the internet connection, provide free internet;
- Digitization of services (e.g., digitization of catalogs, of information, provide e-books, CDs and DVDs);
- Continuous staffing of the libraries and staff development;
- Supply with material based on population needs (e.g., new and modern printed material, materials in Romanian language and in Latin script; Encyclopedias and Dictionaries; newspapers and magazines; foreign literature; specific material (on arts, medicine, health, psychology, economy, accountancy, astrology, sport etc.); teaching materials and schoolbooks.
- Partnering with local stakeholders, private sector and civil society to engage with new audiences and to garner support;
- Open the library to more activities (specifically promote the idea of makerspaces);
- Provide early literacy for kids, help for students of all ages, provide life-long learning for adults and seniors through involvement of libraries' staff and outside experts;
- Make libraries more accessible for people with disabilities;
- Providing entertainment and a community gathering place;
- Promote the services using mass-media;
- Adjust time schedule to population needs.