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**The surplus value and visibility of public libraries based on perceptions of decision makers and library stakeholders.**

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*Publication date:*
2015

Link to publication

# The surplus value and visibility of public libraries based on perceptions of decision makers and library stakeholders
## A phenomenographic study in behalf of the Public Library 2020 Program

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## Background

In cooperation with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation the Reading & Writing Foundation has initiated the Public Library 2020 Program. During the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 this program aims to increase the awareness for the inevitable role of public libraries in Europe. In order to set specific goals and evaluate the impact of the campaign the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel has been asked to develop an evaluation strategy based on the existing framework. Part of this strategy is to set up a baseline measurement in order to compare the starting point with the eventual reached goals at the end of the project. Next to a quantitative study, the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel realised a qualitative study in order to analyse the current state of the perceptions of the decision makers and library stakeholders concerning the surplus value and visibility of the public libraries in Europe.

According to Ceneric et al. (2014) besides quantitative research methodologies often qualitative research methodologies have been used in order to evaluate campaigns of awareness raising or fundraising. Most of the time the qualitative data collection includes focus groups or in depth interviews (Ceneric et al., 2014). According to the research review of Ceneric et al. (2014) concerning 52 evaluation studies of awareness raising and fundraising campaigns in 7 different fields like health, education, and violence-prevention most of the evaluation studies used questionnaires for quantitative data collection or (in-depth) interviews for qualitative data collection. Therefore the research team underlined the necessity of a combination of quantitative data collection and qualitative data collection, in which the qualitative part uses the semi-structured interviews in order to explore the surplus value and visibility of the public libraries in Europe.

## Research question

According to the strategy of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation the Public Library 2020 Program aims to increase the awareness raising concerning the possible role of public libraries in Europe. This program focusses on the fact that public libraries can be viewed and approached as central places in our (digital) societies within EU and national policies. Based on the assumption that the campaign will increase the surplus value and visibility of the public libraries in Europe the following research question can be set:
 *"What are the perceptions of the decision makers and library stakeholders in Europe concerning the current surplus value and visibility of the public libraries in Europe?"*

## Methodology

In order to answer the research question and to reveal the conceptions of library stakeholders and decision-makers on the current visibility and surplus value of public libraries the phenomenographic approach has been used. This phenomenographic approach has been based on a special technique of interviewing, in which one tries to analyse the perceptions of a phenomenon based on perceptions of the different respondents (Marton et al., 1997). According to this research methodology a semi-structured questionnaire has been developed for analysing and describing the conceptions of the library stakeholders and decision-makers. Regarding to Tan (2008), Levitas et al. (2007), Asworth and Lucas (2000) and Howitt and Cramer (2008) the phenomenographic approach can be used to study the interpretations and experiences of individuals concerning a complex phenomenon. Eventually Marton and Booth (1997) point out that a phenomenographic research will describe the different perceptions of an experienced phenomenon among several respondents. This study aims to reveal the phenomenon of the current surplus value and visibility of public libraries among library stakeholders and decision-makers.

*Sample*

According to Marton (1995) and Trigwell (1997) it is necessary to include enough respondents for a maximal variation of conceptions. Furthermore, Sandberg (2000) argues if one would like to reveal five different conceptions one needs to interview 30 respondents. Due to the fact that this study aims to describe two dimensions on the role of public libraries in Europe, namely their visibility and surplus value, the team of researchers included 20 respondents as interviewees. During the process of interviewing one of the respondents had to withdraw due to lack of time.

According to table 1, most of the respondents are female (65%), between 41 and 60 years old (83%) and manage not more than 25 employees (80%). Besides, more than half of the respondents are library stakeholders (58%) for example a public library director or a head of a division of a public library or at any rate working for the field of public libraries (see table 1). 43% of the respondents is working for decision makers or is a decision makers in the EU, to mention among others a staff member of or Member of the European Parliament him- or herself or a European Commission appointed official or staff member (see table 1). Finally, almost all of the respondents are familiar with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (95%) and most of them (74%) knows that the Reading & Writing Foundation of The Netherlands exists next to the Public Libraries 2020 Program (see table 1).
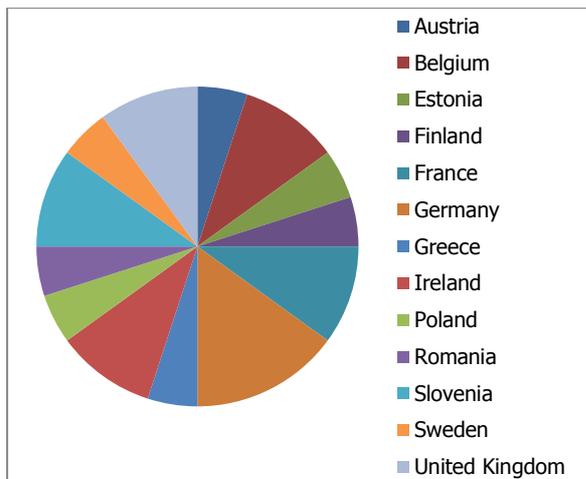
### Table 1: Sample characteristics background respondents (N = 20)

| Characteristic / category in %↓ | |
|---|---|
| **Gender** | |
| Male | 35 |
| Female | 65 |
| **Age** | |
| 0 - 20 | 0 |
| 21 - 40 | 11 |
| 41 - 60 | 83 |
| 61 - 100 | 6 |
| **Professional role** | |
| Staff member of the MEP | 16 |
| European Commission staff member | 27 |
| Public library director or head of division | 21 |
| Other stakeholder working for the field of public libraries | 37 |
| **Management of employees** | |
| None | 37 |
| 1 - 5 | 32 |
| More than 5 | 11 |
| More than 25 | 0 |
| More than 50 | 11 |
| More than 100 | 11 |
| **Familiarity with organisations / programs** | |
| Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation | 95 |
| Reading and Writing Foundation of The Netherlands | 74 |
| Public Libraries 2020 Program | 74 |

[*]*Missing values are excluded in percentage calculations*

According to figure 1, most of the respondents are born in the Northern or Western part of Europe, namely 35% next to 40%. On the contrary, fewer respondents have the nationality of one of the Southern European or Eastern European countries, namely 15% and 10% (see figure 1). Also figure 2 shows that more respondents are working for the Northern and Western part of Europe (16% and 21%) instead of the Southern and Eastern part of Europe (5% and 11%). Almost half of the respondents work for all Member States in the EU, namely 47% (see figure 2).

**Figure 1: Nationality of respondents (N = 20)[*]**



Legend:
- Austria
- Belgium
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Ireland
- Poland
- Romania
- Slovenia
- Sweden
- United Kingdom

**Figure 2: Country for whom is working (N = 19)**



Legend:
- Belgium
- Estonia
- Europe
- France
- Germany
- Ireland
- Poland
- Romania
- Slovenia
- United Kingdom

[*]One respondent has two nationalities
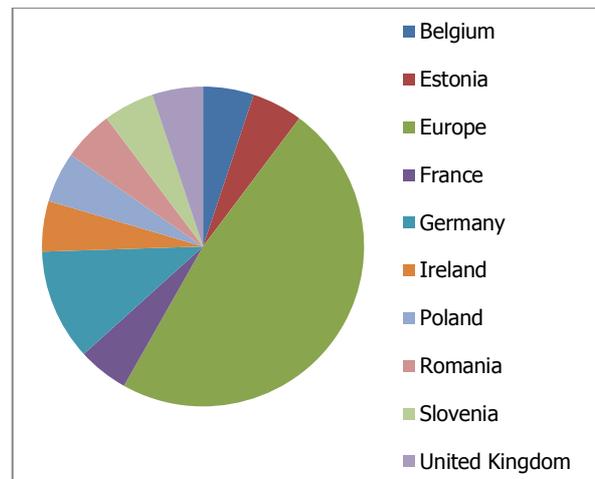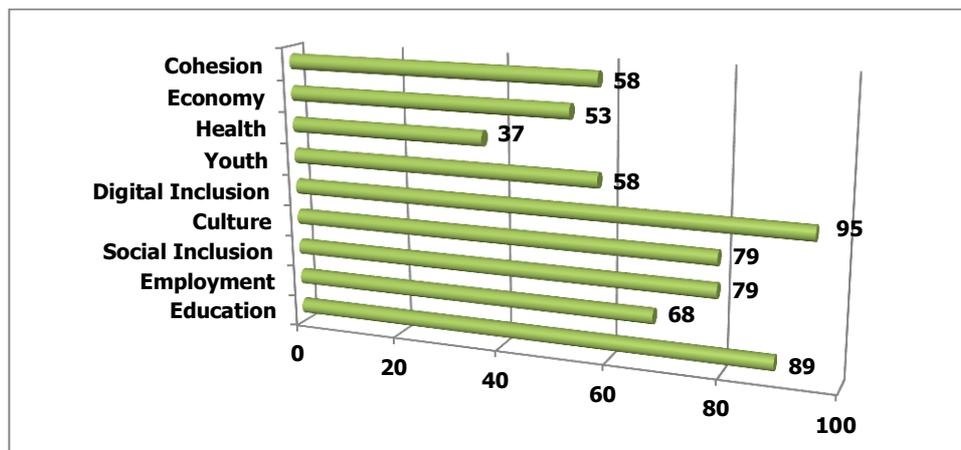
Finally, figure 3 shows that circa 80% or more of the respondents' work have to deal with the different fields like: digital inclusion, education, culture, and social inclusion (see figure 3). Besides, most of them (circa 50% to 70%) work for or with the areas concerning: employment, cohesion, youth and economy (see figure 3). Furthermore, just 37% works for the policy field of health (see figure 3).

**Figure 3: Relevant areas for work (N = 19)**



Cohesion: 58
Economy: 53
Health: 37
Youth: 58
Digital Inclusion: 95
Culture: 95
Social Inclusion: 79
Employment: 79
Education: 68
89

*Procedure and instrument*

According to the framework of the phenomenographic research methodology, the interview technique has been based on a combination of open questions in order to conduct an analysis, which gives the opportunity to the respondents to discuss the phenomenon itself (Booth, 1997). As a result, during the interview the respondents have been asked to discuss the surplus value and current visibility of the public libraries. In order to prohibit subjective interpretation of the interviewers a team of 7 researchers has conducted the interviews after a written instruction. Each interview lasted between circa 30 and 45 minutes and used the same questionnaire existing of 8 prepared questions with additional probing questions (see annex 1).

*Data-analysis*

Firstly, the 20 interviews have been recorded and transcribed by using the same format in order to compare and analyze the results. According to the phenomenographic approach several phases in analysis

are necessary in order to conduct the research analysis thoroughly (Marton et al., 1997). In order to prohibit bias of the interpretation of the researchers the results of the analysis have been discussed by realizing an investigator triangulation and a peer review (Eisner, 1998). This means that each one of the researchers has analyzed a set of interviews and made a "pool of meaning". This pool of meaning of each researcher exists of different categories of results based on the different interviews, which have to be discussed among the researchers. The eventual "pool of meaning" is a result of an investigator triangulation based on the discussion of the interpretations of the conceptions of the respondents (Bowden, 2000). Eventually, after a consensus among the researchers the categories have been determined (Marton, 1992). Finally, in order to overcome intersubjectivity a peer review has been done by one of the researchers (specialized in this theme), who made new categories on the perceptions of the respondents. These categories are compared with the categories of the other researchers and resulted in an "outcome space" as a basic foundation for the results of this study.

**Results of the first dimension: Surplus value of public libraries**
As a result of the analysis two dimensions concerning awareness raising for public libraries will be discussed, to mention the possible surplus value and role of public libraries (including 8 sub dimensions) next to the visibility of the public libraries (including 5 sub dimensions).
Firstly based on the perceptions of the decision makers and library stakeholders, public libraries have an added value for 4 different fields:
1. The field of social inclusion
2. The field of economy and employment
3. The field of digital inclusion
4. The field of literacy

Besides this the decision makers and library stakeholders discuss 4 different roles for public libraries in society, namely:
1. The role of a learning centre
2. The role of an access centre for information (including lending books)
3. The role of a community centre as a meeting place
4. The role of a cultural and recreation centre

*The field of social inclusion*
According to 17 of the 19 respondents the public library can increase the social inclusion of citizens. One of the respondents refers to the fact that libraries can ensure equality in inclusion for different groups: *"It's important that probably a library be available to everybody. So there should be no barriers. (…) Euh, just because of your colour or disability or whatever and saying that importantly, cause they can be a good, euhm, euhm, how can I say, euhm, say a good example for inclusion. But also some other (…) public places. Yeah, euhm, and important for inclusion in the sense that, euhm, if they give everybody access to, if everyone has the same access to education, if everyone has the same access to culture. That's an important part of being included in society"* (R10)[1]. Also R18 thinks that libraries are important to increase social inclusion, but should focus on special target groups: *"Euhm, I think that, (…) libraries should follow, euh, needs of, (…) the inhabitants. So for example if, euh, there are, euh, people, euhm, of different problems as (…) or, euh, euh, immigrants. I think that libraries should, euh, or librarians should, euh, try to find them and attract them to the library and develop an appropriate offer for them. So I, I see of course, I see a role of, euhm, libraries also in this aspect"* (R18).

*The field of economy and employment*
According to 11 respondents of the 19 respondents the public library can have an added value in to the current activities for economy and employment. R8 underlines this by saying: *"So, public libraries have a role in, uhm, government's agenda, in uhm, the economic area. And uhm, they provide information, uhm, in relation to job skill support. They, uhm, provide, uhm, support for entrepreneurs and start your own business, and they're more and more, certainly in Ireland, they are focussing on those areas and, so they*

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[1] The R is an abbreviation for "respondent" and refers to the different respondents of this study.

provide (…) some basic support with, uhm, CV preparation and searching jobs, and uhm, new ideas for, uhm, new businesses" (R8). Likewise, R12 underlines the importance of a public library in supporting young entrepreneurs: "Yes, they also have a part in economical developments, because they are providing information for for instance young entrepreneurs, who need to get information" (R12).

### The field of digital inclusion

According to R16 the public libraries has an inevitable role in the digital developments in life, namely: "Euh, euh, at the present moment and the present past, euh, they, I, I extended the role of public libraries including public libraries due to the digital technologies. (…) But certainly the situation is, is now different and, (…) about the value I think that the idea of public libraries is, euhm, is very valid, (…) and it would be very, very interesting, very important that, euh, that the public library stays (…) a relevant role in the digital age and the digital culture in life" (R16). Likewise R9 explains concrete examples for supporting citizens in digital inclusion: "(…) They are more important in providing access to the internet, euhm, for example I'm travelling and (…) we are in a fellow cottage and I absolutely need to get on the internet to do something important and I don't have Wi-Fi or access, I would go to a library" (R9). As a result, 10 of the 19 respondents underlined the fact that public libraries can have an added value in supporting citizens during digital inclusion.

### The field of literacy

7 of the 19 respondents confirmed that public libraries could play an important role in the field of literacy. For instance, "Euh, and it also, euhm, has at its core (…) the nurturing or the development or absolutely essential living literacies and one being reading of course. Euhm, but also, euhm, the literacy of euh, what I call information literacy, which is the literacy of being able to identify the information you need" (R3). This role is more than just providing information, but according to R4 also the improvement of the literacy skills themselves: "They are tools for, uhm, helping educate people especially in, uhm, diverse literacies that is media literacies. That is reading and writing of course and that is literacy in trying to arrange and to (what would be the word?) uhm, to, to strive, to find out how to lend the literature for the individual" (R4).

### The role of a learning centre

The possibility for learning literacy in a public library stated by R4 refers to the educational role of public libraries, which seems to be important according to 15 of the 19 respondents. Regarding to R13 it can be seen as a possible cooperation with the folk high schools: "That in some towns or villages you have the, euhm, folk high school, you know, which is the adult education organisation, but then you also have the library together with the folk high school and basically the, the cultural and the learning life and the debates of that village. (…) You go there if you want a book, you go there if you want to learn something (…)" (R13). Besides this R18 thinks that public libraries can play a role in learn for life: (…) To provide, euh, the inhabitants, euh, euh, possibilities to learn, euh, to develop the different interest. Euh, and I think that, (…) nowadays we, euh, show the, (…) learn for life. Ha ha, cause they are working so quickly. (…) Not everybody can learn by, euhm, themselves. So we have to help a centre where one can go and attend different, euh, courses" (R18).

### The role of an access centre for information (including lending books)

Besides a learning centre, 14 of the 19 respondents underline that the public library should also be a centre to provide information (next to lending books), for example R10 describes it as follows: "I think that libraries should be able to provide anything actually. Information about, euh, services, information about how to get educational courses presentable, maybe even, why not, information about jobs or vacancies. Euhm, I think it should be the one place where you should be able to go for any kind of information that you need in your life" (R10). Likewise R11 argues that the public libraries can provide information in different ways: "They could serve, they could move to offering services beyond the, the, euhm, books, paper books. They could make use of, (…) open data, open services and, and create online services for users of libraries, which use different sources, make it interactive and so on" (R11).

*The role of a community centre as a meeting place*
(…) I think that, euh, nowadays, it's crucial for, euh, citizens or inhabitants in Europe to have a kind of, euh, third place, (…) which is not public, not, (…) private, not work place, but public place where they can go, euh, they can meet together, do something together and learn. So I think that the first, euh, for me, the first role of, (…) the libraries is to, euh, provide, euh, euh, a meeting place or rather to be a kind of committee, euh, committee centre that can, euh, euh, bring neighbours together, (…) empower them to do something together. (…) So to increase, euh, the social capital, euh, in the community" (R18). Thus R18 states that the public library should be a meeting centre, comparable with the perceptions of 12 of the 19 respondents. Also R7 supports the idea of a community centre where people can meet each other or like R7 says, "a place where the, uhm, entire community, uhm, could meet, uhm, let's say, uhm, every day, uhm, a meeting point of the entire society" (R7) or "the place where everyone must, uhm, find, uhm, its road" (R7).

*The role of a cultural and recreation centre*
Finally, 11 of the 19 respondents supports the idea that a public library is a place for cultural and recreation activities especially for children, like R9 states: *Anyway for taking the children, on a rainy day, you don't want to be at the playground, you don't want to be at home, euhm, it's sort of a free space to be and you can do a bit of reading or drawing and you know enjoying or whatever"* (R9). Accordingly R18 underlines this role of public libraries and says that *"public libraries play an important role in, uhm, social, uhm, economic and cultural life of European citizens"* (R18). According to R6 one has to think about activities like: *"borrowing computer games, playing computer games in the library. Coming to the library to, (…) there is social activity meeting with libraries meeting with writers, (…) public hearings, whatever"* (R6).

**Results of the second dimension: Visibility of public libraries**
In order to analyse the current visibility of the libraries the decision makers and library stakeholders has been asked to discuss the current position of public libraries in Europe on several aspects of being a visible organisation in the public or private market in Europe. The following aspects have been discussed:
1. Public importance
2. Funding opportunities
3. Need of awareness raising
4. Strategic partnerships
5. Interconnection to other fields of policy

*Public importance*
Most of the respondents (namely 17 of the 19 respondents) refer to the importance of public libraries during speeches, lectures or workshops and in written documents, like policy documents, recommendations, reports or magazines. For example R7 contributes to gain public importance for public libraries during several occasions: *"We are frequently, uhm, have this discussion about the role in the library society. Uhm, we are fortune that, uhm, our library will sustain us and, uhm, we have lots of, uhm, agreements between education, uhm, bodies. Also with cultural, uhm associations, and because of our interaction with the community the role of the library is very important in the society"* (R7). Likewise R12 argues that they underline the importance of public libraries in written documents: *"We do, it's very specific (…), for instance, euhm, euhm, taking it into a report or opinion"* (R12). Or like R14 in speeches: *"Yes, very often, ehm, in speeches, ehm. When we had a study day when we write, we got ehm, magazine, ehm, for our (…) association and, ehm, yes, we tell that, ehm, very often"* (R14). Still according to 8 of the 19 respondents advocacy is needed especially among policy makers. According to their perception policy makers don't experience the surplus value of the public libraries, for example illustrated by R1: *"Because I think that politics and those who are paying for libraries, they don't think they are valuable. (…) Yes, it's a problem, but it's a problem of both sides. Of the sides of the libraries, which don't put enough effort in advocacy and from the politicians side, because they don't care about libraries, because they don't see libraries as something attractive and something that could have (…) to their self-promotion"* (R1).

*Funding opportunities*

Besides the public importance, 14 of the 19 respondents describe the fact that more funding for the public libraries is needed or that funding is too less or reduced in the last years. Likewise R8 states that *"they are underfunded, uhm, and, uhm, they, uhm, could be further developed, because certainly in Ireland they're one of the last, uhm, civic (...) local services, uhm, providers"* (R8). Comparably R10 argues, that: *"Euhm, my impression is that because of the current crisis, euh, the kinds of services that are being cut, are the, often include libraries. Or, or other associates linked to libraries. Euhm, and I know in some countries libraries are closing down, or libraries are being forced to reduce their hours closed in days or reduced in the number of services they can provide"* (R10). Besides this some of the respondents think that the funding opportunities differ per country like R19: *"(...) I think it's really, they differ very much. I would guess, they differ very, very much from country to country first and then from town to town. I think (...) huge differences"* (R19). Besides this some of the respondents argues that the funding is not a European responsibility, but more a national or regional responsibility, like R10: *"Not European fundings, cause I don't see this is a European responsibility, member state responsibility, or even regional responsibility. Euhm, so I would say that fundings should be protected by the member states or by the regions"* (R10).

*Need of awareness raising*

Almost half of the respondents (9 of 19) point out that more awareness raising is needed in order to show the surplus value of the public library. This has been underlined by R12: *"Euhm, also bit like I said before the role, which is getting books from there, but also having access to internet or to courses, to language courses, or other professional courses. So it has changed for some time, euhm, knowledge that these, euhm, euhm, possibilities or opportunities exist are not reaching far enough to the population. So, euhm, I think that there should be a bit more PR for libraries, public libraries"* (R12). According to R9 the awareness raising should include the following: *"I think, it's all about, you know, explaining or showing, personally. I think it's free, what value is there and what do you contribute to our society?"* (R9).

*Strategic partnerships*

Besides more attention for awareness raising, 12 of the 19 respondents underline the importance of strengthening the cooperation in partnerships for public libraries like R14 suggests: *"Yes, it could be because, ehm, sometimes we can work with, ehm, with societies working in the digital and we could make things together and, ehm, (...) it's a good idea to form partnerships between public services and, ehm, and companies, (...) when it's interesting for our platform. And, ehm, I think that in some way to explore and, ehm, we have to try and (...) and I think we could, ehm, gain some good results"* (R14). Although R15 supports the idea of forming and strengthening partnerships with other organisations this respondent states that it has to be tailored made: *It might turn out when, when libraries discuss with the different stakeholders that a specific local community needs something quite concrete, that we maybe, we didn't even think about, but that the library could help provide. So I think this has a little bit of, euhm, I would say a tailored approach depending on the community needs"* (R15).

*Interconnection to other fields of policy*

Finally, 12 of the 19 respondents also underline the necessity of connection with other policy fields. For example R20 argues the connection towards education and social inclusion: *"Then gently obviously education is, is clearly very important, but also social inclusion. And as I said earlier (...), at least the library, that I know personally, has a lot of resources for people who are seeking employment, who are trying to improve their skills. (...)"* (R20). According to R13 it is necessary for *"policy makers to understand the potential of libraries"* (R13). Furthermore R13 thinks that one should connect to policy levels of which the increase of influence is possible, namely: *"Where there is a possibility of influence. I think it starts at the communal level for many, euhm, countries, but there is an argument to be made also at European level. I mean in, euhm, to, to connect the areas where the libraries are active, yeah"* (R13).

**Conclusions and discussion**

According to the conceptions of the decision makers and library stakeholders it firstly became clear that most of the respondents argue that public libraries especially can play a role in increasing social inclusion among citizens. Some of these respondents point out that public libraries should aim to attract vulnerable groups like immigrants due to that fact that the libraries can offer them the possibility to be (or feel) included in society. Besides social inclusion, public libraries have an inevitable role in the fields of economy and employment next to digital inclusion. Due to the enormous changes in technology the public libraries can ensure that people can use the services like Internet. This "digital access" in combination with other information services also gives the opportunity for young entrepreneurs to increase their employment chances and to support their chances on the labour market. Finally, the field of literacy seems to be important for public libraries among several respondents. For instance, people who lack the proficiency in reading or writing should have the ability to learn these skills at the public library. This also refers to one of the main roles of a public library in society according to most of the respondents, to mention being a learning centre. According to most of the respondents citizens of the nowadays society can attend courses in a public library in order to learn for life.

Besides the role of a learning centre, the public library should also be a centre for providing access to information (next to lending books). These respondents refer to providing diversity in information, such as information about services, educational courses or jobs. Moreover, the role of a community centre is also important. A public library should a place where for example neighbours and other citizens meet together and can do things together. Finally, a public library can be a cultural or a recreation centre. This means a centre in which one can read or draw, play computer games, meet writers or attend public hearings etcetera.

Next to the surplus value, the decision makers and library stakeholders discussed the current visibility of the public libraries. Speeches, lectures and workshops, but also written documents, like reports, recommendations or policy documents serve as important tools to assure that visibility. Nevertheless, the advocacy for public libraries is necessary to point out their surplus value and to increase the believed public importance especially among policy makers. Secondly, current funding opportunities appear not sufficient or reduced the last years. Thus more funding is needed, however funding differs per country and European funding is not always possible. Accordingly, some of the respondents point out that the responsibility for funding has to be on a national or regional level. Thirdly, more awareness raising and more interconnection with other policy fields is necessary. To date according to some of the respondents awareness raising has to increase in order to show the population the surplus value and the possible contribution of public libraries in society. Furthermore, this surplus value is also possible for different policy fields like education or social inclusion, for example in supporting people to improve their skills at a public library. Finally, the necessity of strengthening strategic partnerships between public libraries and other organisations has been detected and advised that strategic partnerships should be tailor made.

Thus according to the results of this baseline measurement based on the conceptions of the decision makers and library stakeholders, the Public Library 2020 Program has a challenge in increasing awareness raising, strengthening strategic partnerships with public libraries, and increase of interconnection to other policy fields in order to support the surplus value of the public libraries in the fields of social inclusion, economy and employment, digital inclusion and literacy and their roles as a learning centre, access centre for information, meeting centre and cultural and recreation centre. As for the funding opportunities it is not obvious that the European funding should be increased by this campaign, due to the fact that some of the decision makers and library stakeholders point out that the responsibility also could be on a national or regional level.

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**Annex 1: Questionnaire phenomenographic research Public Libraries 2020 Program**

**Research-nr.:....................................**
**Recorder-nr.:....................................**
**Interview-nr.:....................................**

*Part A:Personal and professional information*

**1.1      Gender:**
❑      Male
❑      Female

**1.2      Age?**
❑      ............ years

**1.3      What is your nationality or country you work for?**
*Drop-down menu of 27 countries*

**1.4      Which of the areas below are relevant to your work?**
❑      Education
❑      Employment
❑      Social Inclusion
❑      Culture
❑      Digital Inclusion
❑      Youth
❑      Health
❑      Economy
❑      Cohesion
❑      Other, namely (my pre-occupation is:) .....................................

**1.5      I:**
❑      Do not manage other employees
❑      Manage 1 to 5 employees
❑      Manage more than 5 employees
❑      Manage more than 25 employees
❑      Manage more than 50 employees
❑      Manage more than 100 employees

**1.6      Which of the following organizations are you familiar with?**
❑      Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
❑      Reading & Writing Foundation of the Netherlands
❑      Public Libraries 2020 Programme

*For decision makers*
**1.7      What is your professional role?**
❑      Member of the European Parliament (MEP)
❑      Staff member of the MEP
❑      European Commission appointed official
❑      European Commission staff member
❑      Staff member at the Permanent Representation to the European Union
❑      Staff member of the EU Member Stage Government (Ministry or other agency)
❑      Appointed official of the EU Member Stage Government (Ministry or other agency)
❑      Public library director or head of division
❑      Other

*For library stakeholders*
**1.8      What is your professional role?**
❑      Member of the European Parliament (MEP)
❑      Staff member of the MEP
❑      European Commission appointed official
❑      European Commission staff member
❑      Staff member at the Permanent Representation to the European Union
❑      Staff member of the EU Member Stage Government (Ministry or other agency)
❑      Appointed official of the EU Member Stage Government (Ministry or other agency)
❑      Public library director or head of division
❑      Other

**_Part B. Interview questions decision makers / library stakeholders_**

| These questions refer to the role of public libraries in Europe? We are interested in your view, perceptions and opinion in their future role in Europe. | |
|---|---|
| _Opening question 1_ | What is you perception of the surplus value and possible role of public libraries in Europe? Why? |
| Probing question 1A | Are they important for social inclusion and economic developments in Europe? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 1B | Which role(s) should they play in nowadays society and daily life of citizens? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 1C | How valuable do you think they are? Why (not)? |
| _Prepared question 2_ | Do you often refer to the inevitable role of public libraries? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 2A | Do you often refer to public libraries in speeches? How and where and when? |
| Probing question 2B | Do you often refer to public libraries in documents? How and where and when? |
| Probing question 2C | Do you often discuss the role of public libraries with others? With whom? |
| _Prepared question 3_ | What do you think of the current funding opportunities of public libraries in Europe? Is it sufficient? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 3A | Should we increase European funding for public libraries? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 3B | Which tenders should be opened for public libraries? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 3C | On which level should funding for public libraries be available: European, national, regional or local? Why (not)? |
| _Prepared question 4_ | Should we increase awareness raising concerning the role of public libraries in Europe? Is the current awareness raising sufficient enough? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 4A | What kind of awareness raising should be important then? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 4B | Which channels for awareness raising concerning the role of public libraries are effective? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 4C | Why is awareness raising for libraries important or why not? |
| _Prepared question 6_ | Should we increase or change the strategic partnerships and cooperation among libraries and funders? |
| Probing question 6A | Which partners or bodies are inevitable for cooperation with public libraries in order to fulfill their tasks? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 6B | What should we change in order to strengthen the forces among libraries and their possible deliverables and impact? |
| _Prepared question 7_ | Should we interconnect more policy levels with the possible role of public libraries? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 7A | Which fields are interesting then: Education, Employment, Social Inclusion, Culture, Digital Inclusion, Youth, Health, Economy, Cohesion, Other? Why (not)? |
| Probing question 7B | In which policy documents we should refer to the role of public libraries? Why (not)? |
| _Closing question 8_ | Do you have anything to add on the given answers during this interview? Besides this I would like to thank you for your time and cooperation. |

**_Part B. Interview questions decision makers / library stakeholders_**