

**Question for written answer E-001119/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D)

Subject: Underestimated potential of public libraries in achieving the targets of Europe 2020

A unique network of many thousands of European public libraries helps to actively pursue the targets of the Europe 2020 strategy, especially in the fields of the digital agenda, social exclusion and lifelong learning.

Based on the survey on e-Inclusion actors published in 2013¹, there are approximately 250 000 organisations in the EU seeking to socially integrate members of the community by encouraging them to use information technologies. Public libraries represent 30% of e-Inclusion organisations in the EU, while the second largest category of organisations covers just 14%.

In 2013, TNS conducted a sociological survey of 17 European countries² which investigated visitors' opinions on computer and information technologies in public libraries. It revealed that over the previous 12 months nearly a quarter of adult residents (97.3 million Europeans) had visited a public library, 13.9 million of whom had used the Internet there. Furthermore, 83% claimed that they had saved time and money, improved their skills in a particular area, taken advantage of e-Government services and found more information on employment and health issues. Libraries allow people to study at their own pace and in their own time. Last year alone, approximately 24 million adults in the EU participated in training organised by libraries, of whom 2.3 million attended computer literacy courses.

An impressive fact is that the number of respondents (the Romani, disabled, elderly and unemployed people) who claimed that public libraries are the only place they can take advantage of the Internet is equal to the number of residents in the four least densely populated EU Member States. The survey also revealed that in the previous year as many as 250 000 European residents had found a job by using the Internet at a public library.

Does the Commission not believe that the institutional concept of public libraries which is now being employed in the EU underestimates the impact of the activities of libraries and therefore that their activities are unreasonably restricted? Does the Commission not believe that it would be appropriate to recognise the status of a public library as a non-formal educational institution in EU strategic documents so that they could make more extensive use of EU structural support in accordance with related policies, thereby contributing to the further progress of society and EU priority objectives?

¹

https://digital.lib.washington.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/1773/24060/EU_survey_report_eInclusion_actors_2013.pdf?sequence=1

² http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Kirjastot/kansainvaelinen_ja_eu-yhteistyoe/Liitteet/Final_Report_-_Cross-European_Library_Impact.pdf