



Project: 101249763 — COTAF – Connected Towns for a Shared Future
Programme: CERV-2025-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT

ANNEX A7 - EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.

⚠ Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).)

PROJECT	
Participant:	MOTG
PIC number:	899177294
Project name and acronym:	COTAF – Connected Towns for a Shared Future

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	13 - WP7		
Event name:	Migrant Inclusion in Athens		
Type:	Living Library		
In situ/online:	in-situ		
Location:	Greece, Athens		
Date(s):	25/06/2026		
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.cotafeuproject.info/		
Participants			
Female:	44		
Male:	37		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 [name]:			
From country 2 [name]:			
From country 3 [name]:			
.....			
Total number of participants:	81	From total number of countries:	
Description			



Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

The Event

On 25 June 2026, Movement on the Ground (MOTG) hosted a Living Library at the Embassy of the Netherlands in Athens, as part of the COTAF project's WP8. The event brought together approximately 81 participants across two hours, creating a structured space for refugee and migrant community members to share their lived experiences with local residents, civil servants, diplomats, and civil society representatives in a setting defined by mutual respect and curiosity.

The Embassy of the Netherlands was chosen deliberately. Hosting the event within a diplomatic residence placed the methodology at the intersection of community experience and institutional power, sending a clear signal that the stories of people with lived experience of displacement belong in spaces where policy is shaped and decisions are made.

Twenty refugee and migrant community members served as the event's narrators. In the weeks before the event, each worked with MOTG staff to develop a personal mental life map and a selection of photographs documenting their journey, experiences, and aspirations. This preparatory process was deliberate: by giving narrators full authorship over the topics they wished to open to discussion, the format ensured dignity and agency from the outset. No one was asked to share more than they had chosen to offer. The maps and photographs became physical artefacts during the event, visual anchors for conversation that allowed experiences resistant to easy verbal description to be held and examined together.

The evening opened with welcome remarks from Dutch Ambassador Barbara van Hellemond and Secretary General of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum Konstantina Papakosta, followed by a personal testimony from one of the MOTG community members about their migration journey and resettlement in Greece. Visitors then moved freely between the twenty narrators during the main session, gathering in small informal groups around each mental life map and photograph. MOTG staff circulated throughout as mediators, facilitating deeper conversation where needed and ensuring that the atmosphere of safety and cultural sensitivity that the methodology demands was maintained throughout.

Themes Explored

The 20 mental life maps and photographs ranged widely across the terrain of displacement and resettlement. Emerging themes included:

Migration experiences, covering the personal journeys and reasons that led people to leave their home countries, the challenges faced during migration, and first impressions upon arriving in Greece. Resettlement in Greece, exploring what it means to build a new life, including experiences of accessing housing, education, healthcare, employment, and language learning, and the role of community support and social networks in that process. Cultural identity, celebrating the traditions, languages, food, music, and customs that shape who people are, and reflecting on the experience of living between multiple cultures. Finding work and building economic independence, including the recognition of professional skills and qualifications, barriers to employment, and pathways toward long-term career goals. Religion, as both a source of sustenance and, at times, a source of tension with host-country norms.

The breadth of topics prevented the event from reducing the narratives of refugee and migrant community members to a single story. Discussions moved fluidly between the personal and the structural, with facilitators steering conversation towards reflection rather than interrogation.

Outcomes and Feedback

The event achieved what the Living Library methodology sets out to do: it generated genuine, unscripted dialogue between people who rarely share a conversational space, and it did so in a way that left participants changed by the encounter.

Participant feedback consistently described a space in which people felt safe to speak honestly, without judgement and without performance. Several participants noted that the format revealed unexpected commonalities around shared hopes and daily challenges that crossed cultural and institutional lines. The combination of mental life maps and photography proved particularly effective, offering multiple entry points into conversation and making it possible to communicate experiences that language alone, especially across language barriers, often cannot carry.

The most vivid indicator of the event's impact came from Ambassador Barbara van Hellemond, who reflected that participants were far outside their comfort zone in the Embassy Residence, and expressed pride in having them there representing themselves and merging cultures. Her closing



remarks, centred on dignity, independence, and a sense of belonging as priorities that must always come first, gave institutional weight to what the narrators had shared throughout the evening.

Contribution to COTAF Objectives

The Athens Living Library demonstrated that community-level innovation in inclusion is possible even at the highest institutional levels. By drawing diplomats, government officials, civil society representatives, and community members into direct, unmediated conversation, the event produced knowledge of a kind that surveys and policy consultations cannot replicate: knowledge rooted in relationship, verified by presence, and animated by personal courage. The insights gathered will be brought into the COTAF Policy Lab as concrete examples of community-level innovation in inclusion, and will inform the project's final recommendations on local integration measures across Europe.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).



Management Guidelines – Annex A
M&E Plan & Strategy – Annex 3

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LIVING LIBRARY EVENT MONITORING TEMPLATE

SECTION 1 – Event Identification

Event type: **Living Library in situ**

Work Package: **WP13**

Date(s): **25/06/2026**

Location: **Athens, Greece**

Number of participants: **81**

SECTION 2 – Expected ToC Outcomes (Empathy & Awareness)

Expected outcomes:

- Increased empathy and understanding
- Reduction of stereotypes
- Reflective dialogue

Observed outcomes:

☒ Fully achieved ☐ Partially achieved ☐ Not achieved

Short explanation (max 5 lines):

Around 81 participants, including representatives from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the Greek Ombudsman, multiple embassies, and civil society organisations, engaged in open and reflective dialogue with 20 narrators across five discussion themes. Participant feedback consistently described a safe, respectful environment in which people felt genuinely heard. The mental life map and photography format enabled narrators to lead their own stories, visibly reducing stereotyped framings of refugee experience. The Dutch Ambassador's remarks, noting her pride in having participants represent themselves and merge cultures in the Embassy Residence, stand as a concrete indicator of attitudinal shift among institutional actors beyond the event itself.

SECTION 3 – Dialogue Quality

Quality of dialogue:

☐ Low ☐ Medium ☒ High

Safe and inclusive environment ensured?

☒ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

SECTION 4 – Risks and Mitigation

Did any risk materialise (e.g. low participation, inappropriate behaviour)?

☒ No ☐ Yes

Were mitigation measures applied?



Co-funded by
the European Union



☒ No ☐ Yes

Comments: N/A

SECTION 5 – Learning & Follow-up

Key insight from participants:

Dialogue grounded in personal visual storytelling, combining mental life maps with photography, created a qualitatively different quality of connection than traditional panel or testimony formats. Participants noted that the format made it possible to communicate experiences that language alone, especially across language barriers, cannot carry. Several noted that hearing stories from people of different origins revealed unexpected commonalities around hopes, challenges, and daily aspirations that they had not anticipated finding. The presence of high-level institutional actors, including the Dutch Ambassador and representatives of the Greek Ombudsman, demonstrated that the Living Library methodology can bridge community and institutional audiences within a single event.

Suggested improvement:

Allocate dedicated time after the main session for narrators to debrief with MOTG staff, as sharing personal stories in a formal, high-profile setting such as an embassy residence carries particular emotional weight. A short guided closing circle for all participants, beyond the open Q&A, could help consolidate individual insights into shared takeaways before dispersal. For future events of this scale and profile, a brief orientation for narrators ahead of time on what to expect from an institutional audience would help ensure they feel fully prepared and supported throughout.

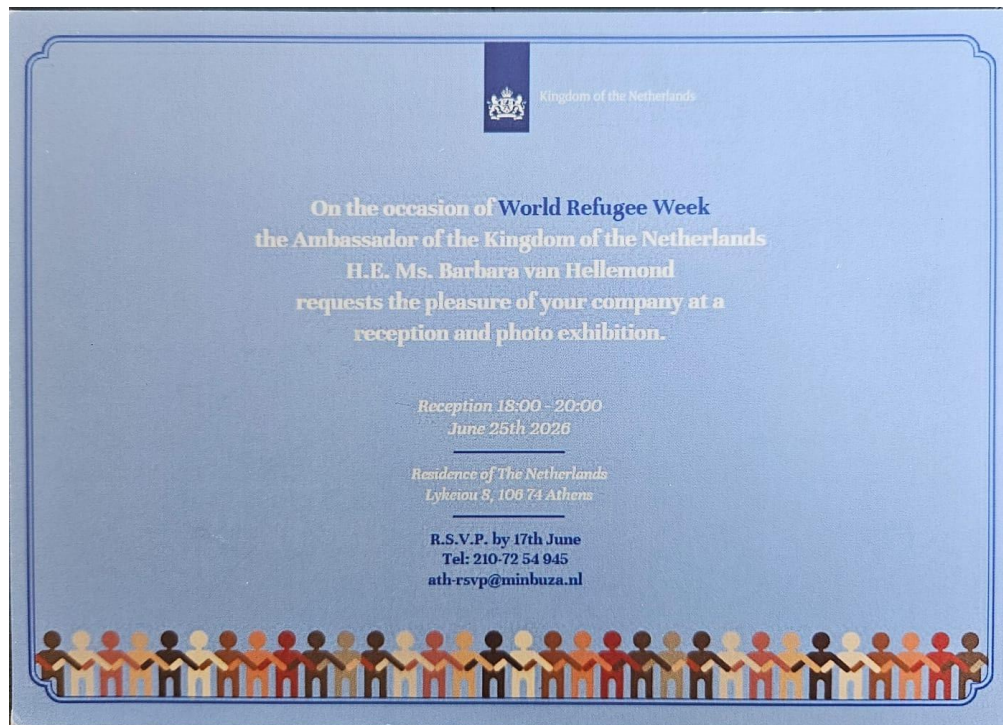
This template is part of the COTAF M&E system and complements the official CERV Event Description Sheet.



**MOVEMENT
ON THE GROUND**

25 June 2026 – Living Library 2026

Embassy of the Netherlands



1. Migration Experiences

- Sharing personal migration journeys and the reasons that led people to leave their home countries.
- Reflecting on the challenges faced during migration and the resilience developed along the way.
- Discussing first impressions, expectations, and experiences upon arriving in Greece.

2. Resettlement in Greece

- Exploring what it means to build a new life and feel at home in Greece.
- Sharing experiences of accessing housing, education, healthcare, employment, and language learning opportunities.
- Discussing the role of community support, local services, and social networks in the resettlement process.



**MOVEMENT
ON THE GROUND**

- Identifying ways refugees and local communities can work together to strengthen social inclusion and community cohesion.

3. Cultural Identity

- Celebrating traditions, languages, food, music, and customs that shape cultural identity.
- Exchanging experiences of learning from one another's cultures and adapting to a multicultural environment.
- Reflecting on identity, belonging, and the experience of living between multiple cultures.

4. Finding Work and Building Economic Independence

- Sharing experiences of searching for employment and entering the Greek labour market.
- Discussing the recognition and use of professional skills, qualifications, and previous work experience.
- Identifying barriers to employment, including language, legal procedures, qualification recognition, and discrimination.
- Exploring factors that contribute to successful workplace integration and inclusive work environments.
- Sharing professional aspirations and identifying the support needed to achieve long-term career goals.

5. Religion

Feedback

- The discussions took place in a safe and moderated environment, since each of the people who shared their stories had previously worked with MOTG staff to create their 'life maps' as well as photography exhibition – so they lead the topics that they wanted to discuss.
- Some 60 people from the local community, including from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the Greek Ombudsman, representatives of different Embassies and multiple Organizations attended the event and discussed the different photographs and life maps, while also taking the time to observe the art themselves and reflect.
- Some quotes by the participants after the event:
 - *"I felt welcome from the moment I arrived. It felt good to share my story and know that people were listening."*



**MOVEMENT
ON THE GROUND**

- *"Everyone had a chance to speak, and that made me feel respected. I learned that we have many of the same hopes and challenges. I enjoyed meeting people I would not normally meet."*
- *"I felt safe to speak and share my thoughts."*
- *"Both the people and the food were good! I hope we can have more meetings like this. The Ambassador took a real interest in our artwork."*
- The Dutch Ambassador shared that we should always prioritize dignity, independence and a sense of belonging. She feels lucky that the participants managed to share a glimpse of their daily aspirations and struggles with the world and she specifically said *"They are so out of their comfort zone here, in the Embassy Residence, and I feel proud to have them here, representing themselves and merging our cultures"*.



Kingdom of the Netherlands

**On the occasion of World Refugee Week,
the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands H.E. Ms. Barbara
Hellemond, requests the pleasure of your
company at a networking reception and
photo exhibition.**

*Reception 18:00 - 20:00
June 18th 2026*

*Residence of The Netherlands
Lykeiou 8, 106 74 Athens*

**R.S.V.P. by 9th June
Tel: 210-72 54 945
ath-rsvp@minbuza.nl**





Kingdom of the Netherlands

Program

1. Welcome Address

Opening of the evening by H.E. Ms. Barabara van Hellemond,
Ambassador of The Netherlands in Greece.

2. Presentation Refugees Connected

The event marks the official launch of **Refugees Connected**. During the presentation, we will elaborate on this innovation-led initiative that aims to create structured digital pathways between employers facing labor shortages with refugees seeking employment who have legal status and are eligible to work in Greece. We use an adapted digital platform, created by **AgriNow**, that aims to bring both sides together.

3. Presentation Photo Exhibition

In collaboration with **Movement On The Ground**, five residents of their refugee shelter for young adults have captured images of their daily lives. MOTG guides young refugees in Athens towards independency and integration within Greek society. The photos will be exhibited during the reception.



2026 PHOTO EXHIBITION

**YOUNG REFUGEES
BUILDING THEIR FUTURE
IN ATHENS**



Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

YOUNG REFUGEES BUILDING THEIR FUTURE IN ATHENS

Through their own eyes, young adults who have been granted refugee status in Greece share glimpses of their daily lives in Athens. These photographs capture moments of challenge, hope, belonging and ambition as they build their future and find their place in Greek society.

They are residents of a housing project for young adults run by Movement On The Ground, a Dutch NGO that supports refugees on their path towards independence and integration. Their images offer a personal perspective on what it means to create a home, pursue opportunities, and contribute to a new community.

This project was made possible with the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Athens.



Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands



“The way I see the world has changed.
This city taught me to fight for my youth,
for my dreams and for my future.”

Charlie

18 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



“I like walking around the city and learning about the culture
and lifestyle of the local people. Life becomes more beautiful
when we learn to overcome our difficulties.”

Meysam

18 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



“I am Sharif, I am 18 years old and I have been living in Athens for about a year. I am happy here.”

Sharif
18 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



“Life has its ups and downs. You should never stand still. You must keep moving forward. Success belongs to those who never give up”

Ali Y.
23 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



“Sometimes we need to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life to feel a little more alive and take a look around us. I always liked taking care of the plants.”

Ali H.

20 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



“Now, I’ve just started getting to know the city and I’m enjoying the experience. Athens is a very historic and beautiful place.”

Sharif

18 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



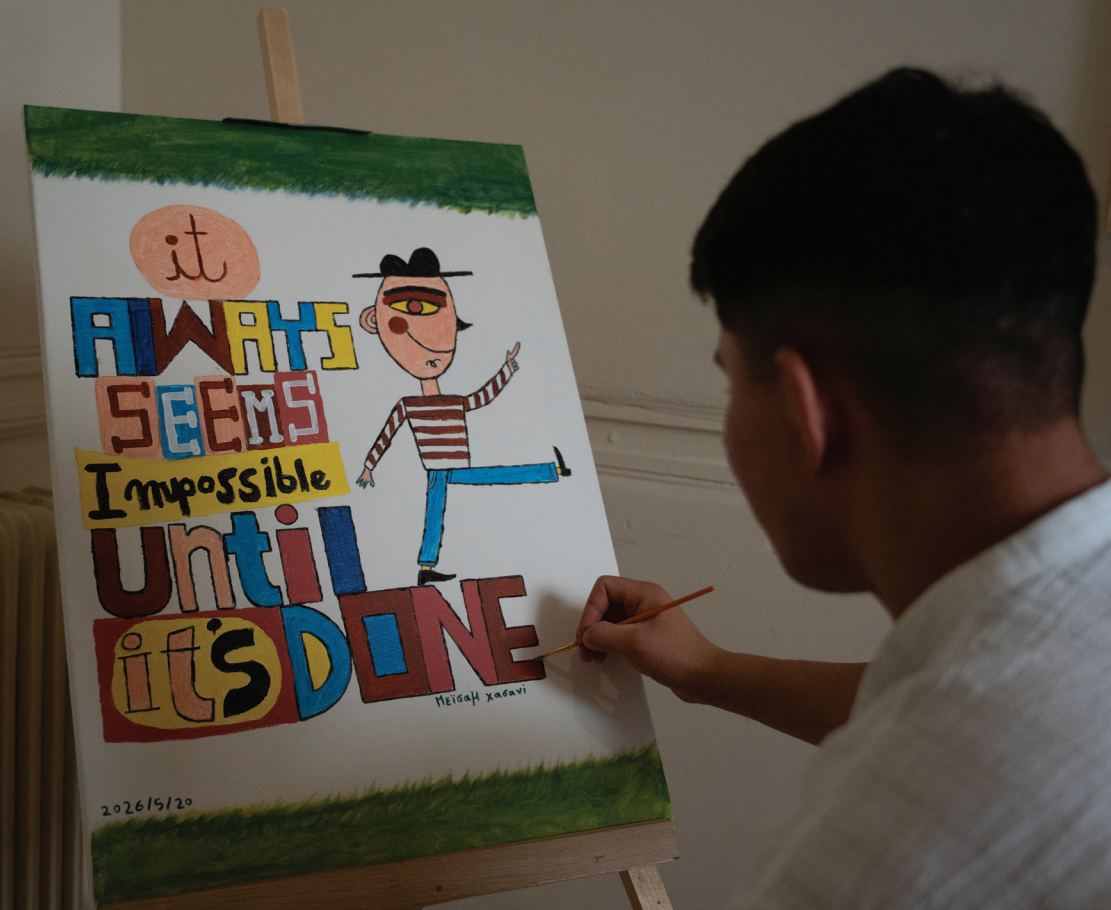
“I spend most of my time working and learning Greek. I am also a high school student. I want to communicate better with the locals and become familiar with the culture of this country”

Meysam
18 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



“I always believed that the things I achieve today were beyond my abilities, until I took the risk and proved myself wrong”

Makary
20 YEARS OLD,
EGYPT



“I enjoy painting. Painting helps me relax and express my feelings and my ideas.”

Meysam
18 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



“Here, I looked at this place because reaching it once felt impossible. But I embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, and I believe that the first step is what makes the impossible possible.”

Makary
20 YEARS OLD,
EGYPT



“I miss deeply my family, and I sincerely hope that those who remain there are safe and well.”

Ali H.
20 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



“I love reading books.
It gives me a sense of peace and comfort.”

Ali Y.
23 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



“Living in Athens has been a valuable experience for me. I learn new things every day and continue to grow as a person. I work hard to achieve my goals for the future. Although I sometimes miss my family and my home country, I remain hopeful and confident. I am happy with my life here and always do my best to build a bright and successful future.”

Samir
20 YEARS OLD,
SOMALIA



“Our friends play an important role in our lives. They can even replace one of your family members”

Ali H.
20 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN

“Beautiful days after work,
feeling good with our friends.”

Ali Y.
23 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



“My life is simple, but I have many dreams for the future. What gives me strength is my family, my loved ones, and my hope for a better life. I dream of being successful, happy and achieving my goals. I try to reach my dreams by working hard, learning new things and staying patient. Even when life becomes difficult, I keep trying and not give up.”

Bashet

23 YEARS OLD,
AFGANISTAN



Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands