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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:	[1] - [Fondazione Yunus Italia ETS] ([YFI])
PIC number:	[878313273]
Project name and acronym:	[Connected Towns for a Shared Future] — [COTAF]

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	[5]		
Event name:	[Gender Equality]		
Type:	[Living Libraries]		
In situ/online:	*[*in-situ*]*		
Location:	[Italy], [Bologna]		
Date(s):	[17/04/2026]		
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.cotafeuproject.info/		
Participants			
Female:	42		
Male:	11		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 [Italy]:	53		
Total number of participants:	53	From total number of countries:	1
Description *Provide a short description of the event and its activities.*			
The event organised in Bologna was designed to promote social cohesion, democratic participation, and inclusion through participatory methodologies based on dialogue, listening, and the deconstruction of stereotypes. This approach is **fully aligned with the COTAF Theory of Change,** which assumes that structured encounters based on lived experience can foster awareness, empathy, and more inclusive attitudes and behaviours.			

In the work plan of project, it was envisaged that, within WP5, an event entitled “Interrupted Paths: Women and Economic Violence” would be held in Bologna, with the aim of promoting gender equality through a specific focus on economic violence and the economic inequalities affecting women. During the implementation phase, the activity was strategically redefined based on the learning outcomes emerging from the project’s Training of Trainers sessions. This shift did not represent a deviation from the original objectives, but rather a methodological strengthening, allowing the event to move from a thematic focus on economic violence towards a broader and more effective Living Library format, capable of addressing gender equality through an intersectional and experiential approach, fully consistent with COTAF’s methodological approach, which uses Human Libraries as spaces for listening, dialogue, stereotype deconstruction, and the building of more inclusive communities.

The Bologna event was therefore structured as a participatory experience centred on direct encounters between Readers and Living Books, with the objective of fostering a deeper understanding of gender-based discrimination and its multiple manifestations. The Living Library proposed an approach to gender equality that was not limited to the economic dimension alone, but extended to a plurality of experiences and conditions, including multiple identities and intersectionality, migration, psychological and sexual violence, violence in work environments, empowerment, self-determination, trans identity, consent, trafficking, exploitation, and pathways out of violence. In this way, the event remained consistent with its original objective of raising awareness of gender inequalities, while broadening its scope through a wider, intersectional, and transformative perspective.

According to the final brochure, **six Living Books were presented**, **and** they shared **seven stories**. **“Between Two Languages”** addressed themes of multiple identities and intersectionality, migration and belonging, inclusive education, language and power, placing at its centre the construction of safe and culturally rich educational spaces. **“Balance”** offered a reflection on workplace harassment, invisible mental load, motherhood and structural vulnerability, consent, and possible responses to trauma, highlighting how violence in workplace contexts can remain invisible for a long time. **“Carla’s Friends”** explored invisible gender-based violence, the crisis of identity and self-esteem, sisterhood and support networks, emphasising the role of sharing, awareness, and empowerment in pathways out of abusive relationships. **“Chronicles of a Necessary Anger”** focused on anger as a resource, the transformation of emotions, feminism as an everyday practice, vulnerability as political strength, and the collective dimension of sisterhood, offering a reflection on the deconstruction of stereotypes and the political dimension of emotions. **“Bread, Roses and Blood: The Bite of the Crocuta”** addressed themes of trans identity and self-determination, the critique of patriarchal models of femininity, the social, political, and material obstacles in transition, media representation, and the freedom to exist beyond imposed expectations. **“If We Were in Japan, I Would Be Called Mulan”** recounted a journey marked by multiple and intersectional violence, abuse, trafficking, labour exploitation, migration, denied motherhood, and the subsequent reconstruction of autonomy, highlighting the dimension of resistance and transformation. Finally, **“One Woman’s Story, Every Woman’s Story”** addressed dynamics of control and jealousy in affective relationships, psychological and sexual violence, emotional dependency, consent, and the difficulty of recognising signs of violence in first relationships.

This plurality of stories made it possible to address the theme of gender equality in an articulated way, fully consistent with the logic of the Living Library, while emphasising the centrality of lived experience as a tool for civic learning and awareness-raising. The selected stories made it possible to challenge simplified readings of the issue, **showing how gender inequalities take different forms and are often intertwined with other factors, such as migratory background, job insecurity, age, social expectations, gender identity, or relational vulnerability**. Together, these stories created a multidimensional narrative ecosystem, allowing participants to engage with gender equality not as an abstract concept, but as a lived and situated reality.

From an organisational point of view, the event was preceded by a structured preparatory phase. Informational and communication materials were developed, the work of the illustrator was incorporated, dissemination activities were carried out through newsletters and social media, and the collection of content and interviews for the creation of the digital library was launched, as this was also foreseen as a complementary tool within the project’s overall framework. **A dedicated meeting was organised with the Living Books** in order to share the aims, functioning, and methodological framework of the event, as well as to address in advance the management of sensitive content. During this meeting, it was clearly stated that each Book was free to choose which aspects of their story to address and which not to address, in full respect of their own limits, wellbeing, and the principle of do no harm. This preparatory phase ensured that all Living Books entered the experience with a clear understanding of their role, their boundaries, and their agency, creating the conditions for a safe but authentic dialogue space.

The event spaces were organised so as to accompany participants throughout the entire experience. At the entrance, there was a welcome and registration phase, including signature collection, **signing of the GDPR consent form**, and consultation of the information brochure. Subsequently, with the support of the librarians, **Readers were able to consult the book catalogue**, read the related book plots, and make informed choices about which readings to attend. Before the sessions began, **participants were invited to read the guidelines for Readers**, which had been

prepared to clarify the meaning of the experience and to encourage a respectful and aware approach. The guidelines stressed in particular that the Living Library is not a debate, a conference, or a competitive discussion space, but rather a place of dialogue grounded in listening, curiosity, non-judgement, confidentiality, the right not to answer, respect for personal boundaries, and the possibility of interrupting the conversation whenever necessary.

The event opened with the institutional remarks of Councillor Simona Lembi, member of the Commission for Equality, Rights and Culture, who guided the audience through an overview of the historical and political path towards the achievement of gender equality, helping to frame the Living Library within a broader reflection on rights, representation, and social change.

Afterwards, Readers began consulting the catalogue and, once they had read the guidelines, took part in the **reading sessions**. Conversations followed a defined structure: approximately 20 minutes of storytelling and Q&A and 10 minutes of break. This structure supported a balance between narrative sharing and reflective dialogue, enabling Readers not only to listen, but also to engage critically and empathetically with the experiences presented. **Throughout the event, facilitators were present across the space, with the task of supporting both Books and Readers in respecting the timing, the shared rules, and the integrity of all the people involved**. Their role was critical in ensuring that the Living Library remained a **psychologically safe yet non-neutralised space, where moments of tension or discomfort could be addressed constructively without compromising the integrity of the dialogue**. Facilitators actively monitored interactions, supported balanced participation, and intervened when necessary to uphold the principles of respect, non-judgement, and emotional safety.

To complement the physical experience and avoid placing an excessive emotional and organisational burden on the Living Books, **a Digital Living Library** (https://www.youtube.com/@ConnectedTownsforaSharedFuture) was developed as an integral component of the event. This included **recorded interviews with 5 institutional stakeholders**, subtitled in English and made accessible through QR codes placed within the event space, allowing participants to engage with additional testimonies independently. This hybrid dimension not only enhanced accessibility and inclusiveness, but also ensured the sustainability and scalability of the initiative beyond the temporal limits of the event.

At the end of the event, Readers were invited to complete an **online survey** and to leave comments and impressions on a shared board, in order to collect qualitative feedback on the experience, the level of engagement, and the possible learnings that emerged through participation.

The impact of the event was assessed through pre- and post-event surveys addressed to both Living Books and Readers. Out of 53 participants, 36 contributed to the evaluation process (approximately 68%).

Survey results indicate a high level of perceived safety and respect (predominantly scoring 4–5), alongside a measurable increase in awareness, understanding of diverse experiences, and openness towards inclusion among Readers. Living Books reported high levels of agency and recognition, although some participants experienced moments of discomfort, which were effectively managed through facilitation.

These findings confirm that the Living Library successfully activated meaningful reflection and dialogue, while maintaining a safe and structured environment, in line with the project's Theory of Change.

Bologna event represented a concrete and coherent translation of the methodological learning developed within the project. Starting from an initial plan more narrowly focused on economic violence, a broader and more articulated Living Library was ultimately implemented, capable of addressing gender equality from an intersectional and participatory perspective. The combination of careful preparation, methodological support, plurality of testimonies, attention to relational safety, and structured feedback collection made it possible to create a space for listening, exchange, and shared reflection, fully in line with COTAF's objectives of challenging prejudice, promoting empathy, strengthening social cohesion, and fostering active citizenship through participatory and experiential learning processes.

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

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COTAF
CONNECTED TOWNS FOR A SHARED FUTURE

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

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

HUMAN LIBRARY EVENT MONITORING TEMPLATE

SECTION 1 – Event Identification
Event type: Human Library
Work Package: WP5
Date(s): 17/04/2026
Location: Bologna (site Yunus Foundation Italia)
Number of participants: 53
The event combined a physical Living Library format with the initial activation of a Digital Living Library, including recorded institutional testimonies accessible via QR codes during the event.

SECTION 2 – Expected ToC Outcomes (Empathy & Awareness)
Expected outcomes:
- Increased empathy and understanding
- Reduction of stereotypes
- Reflective dialogue

Observed outcomes:
X Fully achieved ☐ Partially achieved ☐ Not achieved
The Living Library organised in Bologna on the theme of Gender Equality generated a high level of participant engagement throughout the whole activity. Participants actively took part in the preparatory phase through the reading and discussion of the guidelines, and during the event many chose to “read” more than one human book, extending their participation in order to listen to different life stories and perspectives. Feedback collected through surveys and the public comment board confirmed meaningful reflection, increased awareness, and a willingness to question pre-existing stereotypes.
Survey data further supports this assessment. Out of 53 participants, 36 contributed to the evaluation process (approximately 68%).
Post-event responses from Readers show consistently high scores (4–5) in understanding diverse experiences, openness to inclusion, and recognition of the value of direct dialogue. Similarly, Living Books reported high levels of perceived respect and safety (predominantly 4–5), although some participants experienced moments of discomfort, which were effectively managed through facilitation.
These findings confirm that the event did not only meet its expected outcomes, but did so through a process of authentic engagement, where reflection and awareness emerged from real interaction rather than controlled or scripted exchanges.

SECTION 3 – Dialogue Quality
Quality of dialogue:
☐ Low ☐ Medium X High

Safe and inclusive environment ensured?
X Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

SECTION 4 – Risks and Mitigation
Did any risk materialise (e.g. low participation, inappropriate behaviour)?
XNo ☐ Yes
Were mitigation measures applied?
☐ No X Yes
Comments:
Potential risks concerned delays in organising in-person Human Library events, limited participation of target groups, reputational or safeguarding issues during activities, the possible reinforcement of stereotypes, methodological inconsistencies across countries, staff turnover, and external political or funding changes affecting implementation. To mitigate these risks, the partnership adopted flexible planning and contingency arrangements, targeted and inclusive outreach, clear moderation and safeguarding procedures, shared guidelines and coordination mechanisms across partners, internal knowledge-sharing to ensure continuity, and regular monitoring to allow timely adaptation whenever needed.
During the event, minor situations of tension were observed (e.g. raised voices or emotional reactions during sessions). These were promptly addressed by facilitators and did not escalate into unsafe conditions. This confirms the effectiveness of the safeguarding and facilitation mechanisms implemented.

SECTION 5 – Learning & Follow-up
Key insight from participants:
Participants consistently described the Living Library as an impactful, educational, and emotionally engaging experience. Readers reported increased awareness of stereotypes, improved understanding of lived experiences, and a stronger recognition of the value of direct dialogue. Living Books highlighted the importance of being heard and, in some cases, the opportunity to receive feedback on the impact of their stories for the first time.
The experience also confirmed that meaningful dialogue may involve moments of discomfort; however, when supported by structured facilitation, these moments become opportunities for reflection rather than barriers.
Suggested improvement:
Participants' feedback suggests the need for extended session time, improved spatial organisation, and stronger preparation of Readers prior to the sessions, particularly in relation to understanding their role and engaging in meaningful questioning. Additionally, further thematic clustering of Living Books could enhance the depth of dialogue.
Follow-up actions:
The event initiated the development of a Digital Living Library, including recorded interviews with institutional stakeholders, made accessible through QR codes during the event and subsequently published online. This component will support the sustainability, scalability, and long-term impact of the activity beyond the physical event.

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

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WP5 LL Surveys report – Annex A3

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Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) – Narrative Impact Analysis

The monitoring and evaluation component of the Living Library event held in Bologna was designed to capture not only measurable outputs, but more importantly the **quality and depth of transformation activated through direct human interaction**, in line with the project's Theory of Change. The evaluation combined pre- and post-event surveys addressed to both Living Books and Readers, allowing for a comparative analysis of expectations, experiences, and immediate outcomes.

Out of a total of **53 participants involved in the event**, a subset actively contributed to the evaluation process through survey completion. Specifically:

- **4 Living Books (pre-event)** and **5 Living Books (post-event)** responded
- **16 Readers (pre-event)** and **11 Readers (post-event)** completed the survey

This corresponds to an overall participation rate of approximately:

- **9 Living Book responses** (across phases, partially overlapping)
- **27 Reader responses**
- **36 total survey contributions**, representing roughly **68% of total participants**, a solid response rate considering the intensity and emotional nature of the activity.

While not all participants completed both pre- and post-surveys, the dataset provides a sufficiently robust basis for identifying **patterns, shifts, and qualitative transformations**, which are central to this methodology.

Living Books: From Prepared Agency to Situated Experience

Prior to the event, Living Books entered the process with a strong sense of preparedness and agency. Most respondents reported high levels of confidence in their ability to control their narrative (predominantly scoring **4 to 5 out of 5**), alongside a clear understanding of their right to refuse intrusive questions. Expectations were consistently aligned with the core objectives of the methodology: generating awareness, fostering empathy, and contributing to broader social understanding.

Notably, **no participant reported specific fears or emotional concerns in advance**, suggesting that the preparatory phase—including training, guidelines, and facilitator alignment—successfully created a baseline of trust and psychological readiness.

However, the post-event data reveals that the lived experience of the Living Library is inherently more complex than initial expectations might suggest. While the majority of Living Books continued to report high levels of safety and respect (often scoring **4–5** across dimensions such as respect, control, and facilitation), a minority expressed lower scores (ranging from **1 to 3**) and reported moments of discomfort during the sessions.

These moments did not indicate systemic failure, but rather point to the **authenticity of the encounter**: the Living Library is not a controlled or scripted environment, but a space where real human interaction unfolds. Instances such as raised voices, emotional intensity, or temporary disorientation were reported, yet in all cases, these situations were **effectively managed**, either through facilitation or through the natural rebalancing of the interaction.

This is a crucial finding. The data suggests that the methodology does not aim to eliminate discomfort entirely—which would risk producing superficial dialogue—but rather to ensure that discomfort remains **constructive, contained, and non-harmful**. In this sense, the principle of *Do No Harm* was not interpreted as the absence of tension, but as the presence of **active safeguarding mechanisms**.

From a transformational perspective, Living Books reported significant outcomes. Several participants highlighted, often for the first time, the experience of receiving feedback on their stories and recognizing their impact on others. Others emphasized the emergence of empathy and meaningful dialogue as the most significant aspects of the experience. While not all participants reported a profound shift in how they perceive their own story, the data indicates a consistent process of **validation, recognition, and relational meaning-making**.

Overall, the trajectory of Living Books can be understood as a movement from **prepared agency to situated agency**: from a theoretical sense of control and readiness to a lived experience in which agency is tested, negotiated, and ultimately reinforced within a real relational context.

Readers: From Openness to Structured Awareness

The Reader group presents a complementary but equally significant transformation pathway. Pre-event data reveals a highly heterogeneous group. While some participants reported high levels of awareness and comfort with diversity (scores of **4–5**), others demonstrated more limited familiarity with concepts such as intersectionality, gender-based inequality, and lived experience of marginalization (scores as low as **1–2** in some dimensions).

What was consistent across the group, however, was a strong **openness to dialogue and willingness to engage**, with almost all respondents scoring **4 or 5** when asked about their readiness to change perspective and their expectation of a meaningful experience.

Post-event data shows a clear and measurable shift. Across key dimensions—understanding of diverse experiences, openness to inclusion, and recognition of the value of dialogue—scores consistently moved towards the higher end of the scale, with many participants reporting **4 or 5**.

Particularly notable is the increase in perceived understanding of lived experiences different from one's own, which emerged as one of the strongest outcomes. Participants frequently referred to the **concreteness and authenticity of the stories** as a factor that allowed them to move beyond abstract concepts and engage with real-life complexity.

The awareness of personal stereotypes also increased, though in a more nuanced way. Rather than dramatic shifts, the data suggests a process of **refinement and deepening**: participants did not necessarily discover biases for the first time, but became more conscious of their presence and implications.

Learning outcomes related to gender equality and intersectionality were also evident, though uneven. While many participants reported high levels of learning (scores **4–5**), others remained in the mid-range, confirming that intersectionality remains a challenging concept that requires repeated exposure and reflection.

In terms of emotional and environmental conditions, the results are unequivocally positive. Almost all participants reported feeling safe and respected throughout the experience, and facilitators were consistently rated highly (**4–5**), confirming the effectiveness of the facilitation model in maintaining a secure and constructive space.

Importantly, **no significant cases of discomfort or inappropriate behaviour were reported by Readers**, reinforcing the perception of the Living Library as a well-managed and ethically grounded environment.

Interpreting Impact Through the Theory of Change

When considered together, the data from Living Books and Readers provides strong evidence in support of the project's Theory of Change.

Participants do not emerge from the experience with uniform transformations, nor is change immediate or linear. Instead, what emerges is a layered process:

- Readers move from **initial openness to structured awareness**, gaining a more grounded understanding of diversity and lived experience
- Living Books move from **prepared confidence to embodied experience**, testing and reaffirming their agency within real interactions

The interaction between these two trajectories generates a shared space of meaning, in which:

- awareness is increased
- empathy is activated
- dialogue becomes a recognised tool for social transformation

At the same time, the evaluation highlights a critical enabling condition: **the role of facilitation**. Without it, moments of tension could become harmful; with it, they are transformed into opportunities for learning and reflection.

Final Consideration

The data does not describe a perfectly smooth experience—and this is precisely what makes it credible and valuable. The Living Library in Bologna emerges as a **highly effective, yet inherently complex intervention**, capable of generating meaningful impact while remaining grounded in the unpredictability of human interaction.

Rather than producing simplified or standardised outcomes, the methodology succeeds in activating **authentic, situated, and relational change processes**, which are fully aligned with the ambitions of the CERV programme and the broader European agenda on equality, inclusion, and active citizenship.