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WP10 — HUMAN LIBRARY

Gender Stereotypes

Final Event Report and Impact Analysis
Prague, Impact Hub — 25 June 2026

Implementing partner: **HUB Mladá Boleslav**

This document comprises three connected parts: (1) Event Description Sheet – Annex A7, (2) Human Library Event Monitoring Template, (3) Narrative Impact Analysis (MEL). The few fields marked in red are administrative identifiers to be completed from the Portal (PIC, event number, catalogue URL).



PART 1 — ANNEX A7: EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT

Participant	HUB Mladá Boleslav
PIC number	872415576
Project name and acronym	Connected Towns for a Shared Future — COTAF

EVENT DESCRIPTION

Event number	<i>[to be completed per Portal]</i>
Event name	Gender Stereotypes
Type	Living Libraries (Human Library)
In situ / online	in-situ
Location	Czech Republic, Prague (Impact Hub)
Date(s)	25/06/2026
Website(s)	cotafeuproject.info online catalogue (QR) <i>[catalogue URL]</i>

Participants

Female / Male / Non-binary	Not collected — in order to maximise anonymity (sensitivity of the topics). Participant age group: 18–60.
From country 1 — Czech Republic	46
Total number of participants	46 (6 Living Books, 38 Readers; organising team of 3, including 2 librarians)
Number of countries	1

Description of the event and its activities

Within WP10, a Human Library event on the theme of gender stereotypes was held in Prague. Its aim was to promote equality, social cohesion and active citizenship through a participatory methodology grounded in 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 foster awareness, empathy and more inclusive attitudes and behaviours.

The event took place on 25 June 2026 at Impact Hub in Prague and was open to the public, with a particular focus on company representatives, executives (CEOs) and public institutions. In this way the Human Library methodology was deliberately connected to a setting in which gender stereotypes directly shape everyday decisions — from recruitment and team leadership to organisational culture — and where the deconstruction of stereotypes therefore has the potential to ripple further into organisations and institutions.



The Human Library was not narrowed to a single dimension of gender, but deliberately opened a broad, intersectional spectrum of experiences: leadership and strength culturally attributed to men, non-binary identity, sexuality and the body (including people with disabilities and mature age), domestic violence against men and men's mental health, life without children, and social work in a stigmatised setting. Six Living Books were presented:

- **“A Woman by Obligation” (Žena z povinnosti)** — a non-binary person leading a company in a world where “most of those at the table are men” raises the question of why it still unsettles us when a woman (or roles attributed to women) is accompanied by strength, decisiveness and a healthy relationship to her own sexuality; the story places curiosity, rather than doubt about competence and identity, at its centre.
- **“Sexuality Without Prejudice” (Sexualita bez předsudků)** — a certified sexual assistant for people with disabilities offers a glimpse into a world of intimacy, the body and self-acceptance that is rarely spoken of: sexuality of people with disabilities and in mature age, conscious bodywork, female self-acceptance, and overcoming shame and taboo.
- **“Men Don’t Cry” (Muži nepláčou)** — a father of three recounts domestic violence and abuse that happened “behind closed doors”, and the two years it took him to decide to leave; the story opens the themes of male victims of violence, a father's equal right to childcare, and the experience of panic.
- **“Life Without Children: Choice, Chance, or Freedom?” (Život bez dětí)** — a story about the many forms a life without children can take, about expectations, relationships and prejudices faced by both women and men without children, and about separating myths from reality.
- **“My Role in the Taboo World of the Sex Industry” (Moje role v tabuizovaném světě sexbyznysu)** — Kateřina, a social worker, speaks about her deliberate choice of outreach work in an organisation supporting people in the sex industry, about defending her target group before her own family and the professional community, about the dignity of clients, and about the thin line between vocation and burnout.
- **“Even a Man Can Sometimes Fail” (I chlap může někdy selhat)** — a story about chasing big goals and comparing oneself to others, about a career failure that brought on manic-depressive states and panic attacks, and about the way out through a year-long stay in a therapeutic community, where asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

This plurality of stories made it possible to address gender stereotypes in a multi-layered way and to show that inequalities and prejudices take different forms and are often intertwined with other factors — professional role, the body and health, age, parenthood, identity or social expectations. Gender stereotypes thus became not an abstract concept, but a lived and situated reality.

Organisationally, the event was structured to guide participants safely through the whole experience. It opened with a shared circle in which the Living Books “read” their stories to one another and a safe space was jointly set; this was followed by a welcome from the organisers. Books and Readers had separate spaces and entered into interaction only after the rules had been explained and agreed. The house rules stated that each reading lasts approximately 30 minutes, that Books have the right not to answer, that they tell only their own story, and that they remain anonymous. Each reading took place in an intimate setting of no more than three Readers per Book, with the Books managing their own pace. The organising team consisted of three people on site, including two librarians, who helped Readers with their choices and ensured adherence to the rules, timing and the integrity of all involved.



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Between readings there was a mandatory five-minute break; after particularly intense conversations the break could be extended, once announced to a librarian. This option was used twice during the event for a thirty-minute break and proved to be a key safeguarding rule for the wellbeing of the Living Books.

Given the sensitivity of the topics, particular emphasis was placed on the anonymity of both Books and Readers. A Digital Human Library was deliberately not deployed on site: it would have disrupted the integrity of the experience and the entry into the metaphor of the library, which is a fundamental precondition for the educational impact, and would have run counter to maximising anonymity. Complementary recorded interviews were therefore arranged ex-post as a follow-up, online-accessible component.

At the end, Readers completed a questionnaire and could share their impressions. The impact of the event was assessed through a Readers' questionnaire (38 completed) and a Living Books' questionnaire completed by the Living Books. Results are developed in Parts 2 and 3 of this document.



PART 2 — HUMAN LIBRARY EVENT MONITORING TEMPLATE

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

SECTION 1 — Event Identification

Event type	Human Library
Work Package	WP10
Date(s)	25/06/2026
Location	Prague, Impact Hub (implemented by HUB Mladá Boleslav)
Number of participants	46 (6 Living Books, 38 Readers; organising team of 3, including 2 librarians)

The event was run as a purely in-person Human Library with a strong emphasis on anonymity and on entering the metaphor of the library. A Digital Human Library was deliberately not deployed on site; complementary recorded interviews were arranged ex-post.

SECTION 2 — Expected ToC Outcomes (Empathy & Awareness)

Expected outcomes:

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

Observed outcomes:

☒ Fully achieved ☐ Partially achieved ☐ Not achieved

The Human Library on the theme of gender stereotypes generated a high level of engagement throughout the event. Many Readers “read” more than one Book (38 Readers carried out a total of 48 readings) in order to listen to different life stories and perspectives. Feedback collected through the questionnaires and shared impressions confirmed meaningful reflection, increased awareness and a willingness to question entrenched stereotypes.

Survey data further supports this assessment. The Readers' questionnaire was completed by 38 Readers, thereby covering effectively the entire Reader cohort. Readers reported a very high willingness to attend again (mean 9.0 out of 10; median 9) and a meaningful, though heterogeneous, shift in attitude (mean 6.7 out of 10; median 7). The Living Books, in turn, reported uniformly high safety, respect, control over their own narrative and perceived impact on Readers (predominantly 5), confirming a safe and empowering environment.

These findings confirm that the event not only met its expected outcomes, but did so through a process of authentic engagement, in which reflection and awareness emerged from real interaction rather than from controlled or scripted exchanges.

SECTION 3 — Dialogue Quality

Quality of dialogue: ☐ Low ☐ Medium ☒ High

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



The intimate setting (no more than three Readers per Book), the Books' right not to answer, anonymity and the active role of the librarians created a space in which dialogue could go deep while remaining safe.

SECTION 4 — Risks and Mitigation

Did any risk materialise (e.g. low participation, inappropriate behaviour)? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Were mitigation measures applied? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

Potential risks concerned in particular the sensitivity and emotional intensity of the topics, the risk of secondary burden on the Living Books, possible breaches of anonymity, uneven Reader participation, and the risk of inappropriate behaviour. To mitigate them, a clear set of house rules was applied (anonymity, the right not to answer, telling only one's own story), together with an intimate format limited to three Readers per Book, active moderation by two librarians, and strict timekeeping.

A key safeguarding mechanism was the handling of breaks: a mandatory five-minute pause between readings, with the option — once announced to a librarian — to extend it after particularly intense conversations. This option was used twice for a thirty-minute break, allowing the Living Books to recover and continue without harm. Minor moments of tension or strong emotion were thus contained and did not escalate into unsafe situations, confirming the effectiveness of the measures in place.

SECTION 5 — Learning & Follow-up

Key insight from participants:

Readers repeatedly described the Human Library as an impactful, educational and emotionally powerful experience. They reported that the encounter helped them “see the person, not the label”, reconsider judgements formed out of ignorance, and recognise the value of direct dialogue. Many reflections extended into professional and civic life — from assessing people more fairly on competence (rather than gender) and taking mental health more seriously, to a more sensitive perception of victims of violence and of decisions about (non-)parenthood.

The Living Books highlighted being genuinely heard, the reciprocity of the encounter — that it is not only about their own stories but also about those of the Readers who came to “read” them — and, for sensitive topics such as the male experience of violence, the value of simply opening a question that is usually kept silent. Several reaffirmed that sharing their story is meaningful and reported feeling even better after the event than before.

Suggested improvement:

The organising team identified the extended-break rule as exceptionally valuable and recommends keeping it as a standard. Beyond this, neither Readers nor Living Books raised specific complaints or needs for change, and the Living Books expressed high satisfaction with the format and the facilitation. The principal learning, however, concerns reach rather than format: those who attended were already, to varying degrees, open to the topic, yet still found meaningful impact in the dialogues they had. To raise the overall impact of future editions, the priority is to reach people who would not attend such an event on their own initiative — for example through agreements with managers and organisational leaders to delegate their employees to take part.

Follow-up actions:



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The event initiated the preparation of a follow-up, online-accessible component — recorded interviews arranged ex-post — and an online catalogue of the Books accessible via QR code. This component will support the sustainability, scalability and long-term impact of the activity beyond the in-person event, while preserving the emphasis on anonymity.

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



PART 3 — NARRATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS (MEL)

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning — WP10 LL Surveys report (Annex A3)

The monitoring and evaluation component of the Prague Human Library was designed to capture not only measurable outputs, but above all the quality and depth of transformation activated through direct human interaction, in line with the project's Theory of Change. The evaluation used a Readers' questionnaire and a Living Books' questionnaire, complemented by shared impressions and observations from the organising team.

The event involved 46 participants: 6 Living Books and 38 Readers. Readers carried out a total of 48 readings (many “read” more than one Book); the Readers' questionnaire was completed for 46 readings and submitted by 38 Readers, i.e. effectively the entire Reader cohort. The Living Books' questionnaire was completed by the Living Books and is analysed below.

Living Books: From Prepared Agency to Situated Agency

The Living Books entered the experience with a clear sense of preparedness and agency. Most reported high confidence in their readiness and clarity about their own boundaries (scores predominantly 4–5), and their pre-event feelings combined calm determination with, in some cases, mild nervousness (“I felt good and determined, I had no fears,” “slightly nervous, but it was worth it”). Their expectations were aligned with the purpose of the methodology — to share a story that matters and to be heard.

After the event, the data shows a consistently high and, in places, deepened sense of safety and agency. Across the dimensions of safety and respect, control over one's own narrative, perceived impact on Readers, and power over one's own story, the Living Books scored uniformly at the top of the scale (predominantly 5). A minority of scores sat lower (an isolated 3 for preparedness and for facilitation), which does not point to a systemic problem but rather to the authenticity of the encounter: the Human Library is not a fully controlled or scripted environment.

Crucially, the Books' sense that sharing is meaningful was reinforced through the lived experience. Several described the event as confirming the value of telling their story (“it reaffirmed that sharing my story makes sense”; “it had and has meaning — I felt even better afterwards”). This marks a movement from prepared agency to situated agency: from a theoretical readiness to a lived experience in which agency is tested and ultimately strengthened in real relational contact.

The qualitative responses to the flagship question — the strongest moment of the event — converge on three themes:

- **Being genuinely heard.** One Book was struck that “people really listen — their questions, their attention,” describing it as something that “restores a little of my faith in humanity.”
- **Reciprocity of the encounter.** Another emphasised that the experience “is not only about our stories, but also about the stories of those who came to read us,” in a setting they found beautifully cultivated, kind and open.
- **Opening a silenced question.** For the Book addressing the male experience of violence, the strongest moment was that the question is opened at all — “that men, too, go through things” — with the dilemma resonating “with women as much as with men,” not in order to assign blame but to raise awareness.

Moments of discomfort were rare and contained. One Book reported a Reader moved to tears during a session and noted that this did not unsettle them. This is consistent with the organisers' record of two particularly intense conversations, after which the extended-break rule was applied.



No Book reported a harmful experience, and the principle of Do No Harm was realised not as the absence of emotion but as the presence of active safeguarding. Asked for suggestions, the Living Books raised no specific needs for improvement and expressed high satisfaction with the format and the facilitation.

Readers: From Openness to Structured Awareness

The Reader group underwent a clear and measurable transformation. The questionnaire captured two main quantitative dimensions — willingness to attend again (as an indicator of engagement and of the value of the experience) and self-reported attitude change — complemented by qualitative reflections.

Willingness to attend again was exceptionally high: a mean of 9.0 out of 10 (median 9), with the vast majority of responses in the 9–10 range. This indicates strong engagement and shows that Readers perceived the format as valuable. Self-reported attitude change reached a mean of 6.7 out of 10 (median 7, standard deviation 2.6; range 1–10) — the shift is therefore meaningful, but markedly heterogeneous across Readers and topics.

Attitude change and number of readings by Book

Book	Readings	Attitude change (Ø)
Men Don't Cry	5	8.4
My Role in the Taboo World of the Sex Industry	9	7.4
A Woman by Obligation	9	7.3
Life Without Children	6	7.3
Sexuality Without Prejudice	6	5.2
Even a Man Can Sometimes Fail	11	5.1
Total / average	46	6.7

The strongest attitude shift was reported for “Men Don't Cry” (8.4) and “My Role in the Taboo World of the Sex Industry” (7.4), followed by “A Woman by Obligation” and “Life Without Children” (both 7.3). The lower average shift for “Sexuality Without Prejudice” (5.2) and “Even a Man Can Sometimes Fail” (5.1) should not be read as weaker impact: qualitative comments show that these topics were already familiar to part of the audience (including professionals from the helping professions and people with lived experience) — for them it was more a matter of confirmation, naming and deepening than of discovering something entirely new. The most-read Book was “Even a Man Can Sometimes Fail” (11 readings), which confirms strong interest in men's mental health despite the more modest shift among an already-aware audience.

The qualitative feedback brings up the same recurring motifs: seeing a specific human being behind the topic rather than a label; becoming aware of one's own judgements formed out of ignorance and judging less while asking more; and carrying insights into practice — assessing people on competence and watching for invisible bias in recruitment, taking mental health as seriously as physical health, not presuming who is the victim and who the aggressor, and respecting others' decisions about (non-)parenthood as well as the dignity of people on the margins of society. The shift in stereotypes thus often takes the form of refinement and deepening of awareness rather than a sudden reversal.

In terms of emotional and environmental conditions, the results are clearly positive. The house rules, the intimate format, the active role of the librarians and the handling of breaks created a safe



and constructive environment; no cases of inappropriate behaviour were reported on the Readers' side, reinforcing the picture of the Human Library as a well-managed and ethically grounded space.

Interpreting Impact Through the Theory of Change

The Reader data — and the Living Books data — support the project's Theory of Change. The transformation is neither immediate nor uniform across everyone; it is rather a layered process:

- **Readers** move from initial openness to structured awareness — to a more grounded understanding of diversity and lived experience, often with a spillover into their professional and civic roles.
- **Living Books** move from prepared confidence to a lived, situated agency, which they test and reaffirm in real interaction — entering prepared and leaving with a strengthened sense that telling their story matters.

The interaction of both roles generates a shared space of meaning in which awareness increases, empathy is activated, and dialogue becomes a tool for social transformation. At the same time, the evaluation highlights a key enabling condition — the role of facilitation and safeguarding rules: without them, moments of tension could become harmful; with them, they turn into opportunities for learning and reflection. The extended-break rule proved to be a concrete, practically applied mechanism of this safeguarding. Moreover, given the focus on companies, executives and institutions, the shift achieved has the potential to spread further into organisations and the public sphere.

Final Consideration

The data does not describe a perfectly smooth experience — two conversations were intense enough to require an extended break — and that is precisely what makes it credible. The Prague Human Library emerges as a highly effective yet inherently complex intervention, capable of generating meaningful impact while remaining grounded in the unpredictability of human interaction.

The deliberately analogue design without an on-site digital library, with a strong emphasis on the anonymity of both Books and Readers, did not prove to be a limitation but a methodological strength: it protected the entry into the metaphor of the library and the safety of participants dealing with sensitive topics. Rather than producing simplified or standardised outcomes, the methodology activated authentic, situated and relational processes of change, fully aligned with the ambitions of the CERV programme and the broader European agenda on equality, inclusion and active citizenship.