

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] - [Comune di Montecchio] ([Montecchio])
PIC number:	[880574052]
Project name and acronym:	[Building European Towns] — [BET]

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	[1]		
Event name:	[First International Workshop]		
Type:	[Workshop]		
In situ/online:	[in-situ]		
Location:	[France], [Bléneau, Treigny-Perreuse-Sainte-Colombe, Saint-Fargeau, Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye]		
Date(s):	[4th – 7th April 2025]		
Website(s) (if any):	https://bet98.webnode.it/		
Participants			
Female:	80		
Male:	65		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 [Italy]:	105		
From country 2 [France]:	40		
Total number of participants:	145	From total number of countries:	2
Description			
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>			
BET First International Workshop took place in Bléneau, Treigny-Perreuse-Sainte-Colombe, Saint-Fargeau, Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye in France from 4th to 7th April 2025. It involved four delegations from four Italian municipalities – Montecchio, Giove, Penna in Teverina and Attigliano – and the French communities of the involved towns of Bléneau, Treigny-Perreuse-Sainte-Colombe, Saint-Fargeau, Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye. The target groups have been composed by the citizens of the participating organizations, public authorities, stakeholders, local NGOs, volunteers and decision-makers. The project has involved more than 50% of women in the target groups. Young people's and women's voices were particularly valued, giving the opportunity to experience a diverse exchange of opinions and promoting intergenerational, intercultural and cross-sectoral dialogue. This event has brought together towns that have been twinned for a long time, such as Giove and Bléneau and Saint-Sauveur and Penna in Teverina, and has created new twinning bonds between the municipalities of			

Attigliano and Saint-Fargeau and Montecchio with Treigny. Addressing the insights coming from discussions between the twinned rural municipalities and organizations and targeting rural communities and their citizenries and the rural areas with high rates of depopulation and ageing in Italy and France, the Workshop "European European Identity and small communities: how enhance EU identity in small towns" has given the opportunity to discuss some important themes and reflect on European tools and policies about rural towns.

Several obstacles to active multilevel participation of rural citizenries have come up: the language barrier, the distance (also physical) from institutions, the complexity of bureaucracy, the disinformation, the ignorance, the cultural gaps. Consequently, debates have been carried out on how to increase the sense of belonging to the European Union in communities that feel distrust and distance towards European institutions and authorities. This gave space for discussions on the future of rural communities, which is in young people's hands. Good practices and recommendations have emerged: it would be useful to arrange Dialogue Circles between older and younger people in each town to strengthen European identity and inclusion; libraries with "EU corners" where to learn more about European policies and tools of participation; International cultural weeks to promote shared heritage and traditions; civic workshop to help citizenries navigate EU and local institutions more easily; cross-border volunteering for young people and schools between twinned towns. These bottom-up solutions were gathered to be discussed further during the second event. The seminar about the EU Rural Vision and a demonstration of the use of the tools of the Rural Observatory, such as the "My Place" tool, made participants feel closer to the Union's agenda and increasing their trust in the use of the tools available online on EU websites. The presence of an important decision-maker, Senator of Yonne, Chairwoman of the Delegation for Women's Rights Dominique Verien, multiplied the impact of the event at a national and international level. At the end of the workshop and of the seminar, Twinning Agreements were signed.

Besides workshop activities linked to the project's theme and pursuing the cultural heritage objective of the project, BET has also been an occasion to experience the local culture and the historical and artistic heritage of the involved French towns, including theme-based and cultural visits to Château de Ratilly, Château de Guédelon, Bourdon Lake, Château de Saint-Fargeau, municipal premises of Bléneau and Saint-Fargeau and Treigny, and the historic centres of Bléneau, Perreuse and Saint-Fargeau. Most dinners have been arranged by local volunteers and the local twinning committees and featured a moment of joyful and friendly get-togethers, talks, dances, singings among the citizens of the involved towns and the local participants. The innovative approach of this event is that BET First International Workshop has addressed and involved people coming from different social contexts, of different ages and with different backgrounds.

To sum up, the event has been an occasion to discuss common European issues and European policies linked to local and European actions on rural areas and rural communities. The event has triggered change since it has informed citizens and has empowered them to participate actively to create more resilient, connected, wealthy and engaged societies and strengthen European identity in small and remote communities. Thanks to this event, citizens have also been able to exchange and learn best practices about current issues regarding rural areas and have created objects of reflection that will be furtherly discussed during the second event. Furthermore, the municipalities have strengthened their friendship and created new twinning connections, encouraging cooperation for future initiatives.

Agenda of activities:

Friday, April 4th

Arrival of the delegation in Paris and transfer to Bléneau.

Lunch with the French representatives.

Arrival in Mézilles and transfer of delegations to their accommodations in Bléneau and Perreuse.

Dinners in Bléneau and Perreuse.

Saturday, April 5th

Breakfast in Bléneau

Departure of delegations to Saint-Fargeau and Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye.

Visit of Ratilly Castle followed by lunch.

Conference in Bléneau:

Introductory speeches

Presentations by French and Italian municipalities

Collective workshop: "European Identity and small communities: how to enhance EU identity in small towns" and Mentimeter and citizens' panels discussion about the obstacles met when participating actively in the EU decision-making processes.

Vin d'honneur and dinner in Bléneau.

Sunday, April 6th

Breakfast in Bléneau.
 Visit of Guédelon site followed by lunch.
 Visit of Perreuse village and the Loing spring.
 Visit of Saint-Fargeau Castle
 Seminar "Rural Vision of EU" and citizens' debate with local authorities on the rural communities and their role and participation of rural communities' citizens in the decision-making processes of the EU.
 Dinner at the lake and return to accommodations.

Monday, April 7th

Departure of delegations.

As town-twinning projects should foster debates on how to create a more democratic Union, enabling citizens to re-engage with the EU and strengthen their sense of ownership of the European project, BET First International Workshop has already generated several concrete outcomes in this regard:

- Democratic participation and debate: citizens from small rural municipalities in Italy and France engaged in structured discussions on the challenges they face in relation to EU institutions, including barriers such as language, distance from decision-making centres, and lack of information. This debate allowed participants to collectively identify solutions and proposals.
- Sense of ownership of the EU project: activities such as the discussions and the seminar on the EU Rural Vision gave participants the opportunity to understand EU tools (e.g. the Rural Observatory's "My Place" tool) and how these can be applied in their local contexts. This increased trust in EU institutions and a feeling of being directly involved.
- Concrete proposals for a more democratic Union: the event produced bottom-up recommendations through direct citizens' panels consultations, such as Dialogue Circles between generations, EU Corners in local libraries, international cultural weeks, civic workshops, and cross-border volunteering opportunities. These proposals demonstrate how citizens of small towns can actively contribute to shaping the European project+
- Inclusion of diverse voices: more than 50% of participants were women, and particular space was given to young adults. This intergenerational and intercultural dialogue was central to the event, reinforcing democratic engagement at the community level.

Press articles:

<https://bet98.cms.webnode.it/column/>

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