



# INTERETHNIC PERCEPTION REPORT







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**UDRUŽENJE - CENTAR ZA  
EDUKACIJU I PODIZANJE SVIJESTI O  
POTREBI POVEĆANJA ENERGETSKE  
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# INTRODUCTION

Center for Education and Raising Awareness of Energy Efficiency – Energis organized the education camp "Green Rural Interethnic Development" in the period from February 22 - 25, 2021 supported by the United States Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 50 young people from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina gathered to learn and discuss important topics related to climate change, renewable energy sources, sustainability, startups, interethnic reconciliation and community's development as the basis for activism and positive social change.

Young people have the potential to improve interethnic tolerance and cooperation through their work toward common goals in mitigating climate change and sustainable development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main objectives of the project were to improve interethnic tolerance and the cooperation of youth (aged 15 to 29) from various universities located in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and the Brčko District. The main mission was to use education and joint work during and outside of session hours, as well as physical exercises and study visits in enabling the participants to surpass their differences and find a common aim by providing support to the field of sustainable development, sustainable business practices, and increasing the share of renewable energy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This has been achieved by encouraging the participants to work together in developing their capacities and exchange experiences to create quality and reliable young professionals who will promote and advocate for joint efforts in achieving sustainable development, clean energy, reconciliation, healthy dialogue, tolerance and respect for each other within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The project participants came from various parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina including Bihac, Bileca, Bosanski Petrovac, Brčko, Donji Vakuf, Foca, Jajce, Novi Travnik, Sarajevo, Sije, Srebrenik, Teocak, Tinja, Trebinje and Ustikolina.

# METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The study used two types of methods for data collection. The first part was related to the qualitative data collection taking an ethnographic perspective which includes program and participants observation, note-taking as well as one-on-one interviews. Considering the framework and set goals of this study, data such as ethnic belonging and the importance of religion had to be considered. This study implements surveys using standardized evaluation scales. The second way of data collecting implemented during the program was a two-time (T1, T2) questionnaire given to the participants before and after the program took place in February 2021. The study sample included 50 participants who attended the program.

The participants completed the same questionnaire before and after the intervention. In order to test the main hypotheses of common ingroup identity, ethnic identity, negative outgroup perception, trust towards outgroup members and empathy towards outgroup members before and after the program participation, the intercultural sensitivity scale, as well as the social distance scale, was implemented. This means that the questionnaire included scales measuring the levels of trust towards outgroup members and the belief in getting closer and becoming friends with the other ethnic groups differing from their own. The Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) were used to assess participants' level of agreeing with each statement. In data processing the statistic package IBM SPSS 25 was used. For data comparison, a paired sample t-test and descriptive statistics in forms of frequency analysis were used. The t-test is a statistical test of difference that helps verify whether there is a real difference between the tested occurrences. For this study, the t-test was used to determine the differences between the perception of common ingroup identity and ethnic identity as well as levels of trust and empathy towards outgroup members before and after the program attendance as well as targeting if there is any presence of negative outgroup perception.

# THE ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT BASED ON PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES

In the survey, there were two questions related to the program assessment and personal impressions. Overall, majority of the participants were very satisfied with the program and graded it as very good. Analysis of these responses suggests the conclusion that opinions were very similar. Sessions they emphasized the most and that were very appealing to them were interactive lectures, networking, work in groups during the development of a business and marketing plan. Several participants emphasized the importance of social activities they had during the afternoons with other participants. During social activities, participants talked about the multiculturalism of the country, the differences, and the similarities that connect them. Most participants liked the field visits. Overall, personal impressions were positive, and they would highly recommend to their friends to take part in other programs of this kind.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very Good	41	82
	Good	9	18
	Total	50	100

Table 1. Statistics answer the questions "How did the program meet your expectations?"

The question about program expectations indicates the seriousness and readiness of the participants to attend a program like this. Based on their answers it was evident that the vast majority had a clear expectation from the program (94%). Most of the participants wrote that they are attending the program to get to know more about sustainability and energy efficiency, rural development and climate change, and also about how to develop a business and marketing plan, as well as to get to socialize and meet other like-minded people from other parts of the country.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	47	94
	No	1	2
	Don't know	2	4
	Total	50	100

Table 2. Statistics answer the questions "Having any expectations from the program"

Most participants did not attend similar programs. However, some 40% already attended similar programs. This question was raised with the assumption of the importance to attend similar programs more than once, hoping that the participants who were attending it for the first time will be motivated to attend more programs as such in the future.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	20	40
	No	30	60
	Total	50	100

Table 3. Statistics answer the questions "Attended similar programs"

# IMPACT ASSESSMENT BASED ON THE QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The first part of the report aims to present the frequency and percentage of gender, places of living, ethnicity and other important parameters related to the participants and their overall program impressions. The table below indicates the overall numbers of frequency related questions.

		Place of living	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Are you religious?
N	Valid	50	50	50	50	50
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4. The table indicates the overall numbers of frequency related questions

The empirical part of the study included a sample of 50 participants coming from the entire country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The respondents came from 21 different locations within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Table below shows participants' places of living.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Bihac	4	8
	Bileca	1	2
	Bosanski Petrovac	1	2
	Brcko	2	4
	Donji Vakuf	1	2
	Foca	6	12
	Jajce	1	2
	Novi Travnik	1	2
	Sarajevo	8	16
	Sije	1	2
	Srebrenik	2	4
	Teocak	1	2
	Tinja	1	2
	Trebinja	2	4
	Ustikolina	7	14
	Visoko	2	4
	Vitez	1	2
	Zavidovici	2	4
	Zenica	4	8
	Zepce	1	2
	Zvornik	1	2
Total		50	100

Table 5. Place of living of the participants

Gender distribution was fairly unequal. 36 of the participants identified themselves as female and 14 as male. Age range varied from 15 to 29 years of age.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	15	1	2
	19	3	6
	20	3	6
	21	7	14
	22	7	14
	23	10	20
	24	3	6
	25	13	26
	28	1	2
	29	2	4
Total		50	100

Table 6. Age of the participants

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	14	28
	Female	36	72
	Total	50	100

Table 7. Gender of the participants

Looking at the ethnic distribution of the participants. There as an evident majority of Bosniak presence. There were only one Croat participant, seven Serb participants and four belonging to mixed ethnicities, which would be classified as “other” according to the country’s constitution. Comparing the participants’ ethnic belonging to one of their parents, we can conclude that they are almost identical. For comparison reasons, please see below two tables about personal ethnicity and parents’ ethnicity.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Bosniak	38	76
	Croat	1	2
	Other	4	8
	Serb	7	14
	Total	50	100

Table 8. Participants’ ethnicity

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Bosniak	37	74
	Bosniak/Serb	1	2
	Croat	1	2
	Other	4	8
	Serb	7	14
	Total	50	100

Table 9. Parents’ ethnicity

Starting with the assumption that ethnic belonging is closely related to their religious affiliation, two questions were asked about the importance of religion in their lives. Most of the participants consider themselves religious. However, when comparing the feeling of ethnic belonging with religious affiliation, we can witness that around 36% of the participants do not consider themselves as religious but feel an ethnic belonging.



		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	32	64
	No	18	36
	Total	50	100

Table 10. Statistics answer the questions “Do you consider yourself religious?”

## RESULTS

Likert-type scale was used to assess participants’ level of agreement with each item. Common ingroup identity, ethnic identity, negative outgroup perception, trust and empathy towards outgroup members were measured. The paired sample t-test was used for this study to determine the differences between the perception of the ethnic other before and after the program attendance as well as the personal perception of identity before and after the participants’ program participation. The analysis was performed on cantered variables (Common ingroup identity, ethnic identity, negative perception, trust and empathy). See tables below for detailed analysis.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Common Ingroup Identity T1	4.114	50	.6869	.1161
	Common Ingroup Identity T2	4.086	50	.7811	.1320
Pair 2	Ethnic Identity T1	3.857	50	.6500	.1099
	Ethnic Identity T2	3.971	50	.7763	.1312
Pair 3	Negative Perception T1	1.6071	50	.58876	.09952
	Negative Perception T2	1.6786	50	.62594	.10580
Pair 4	Trust T1	3.25238095 2380953	50	.4579926159 09716	.0774148815 94068
	Trust T2	3.2214	50	.34711	.05867
Pair 5	Empathy T1	3.986	50	.6358	.1075
	Empathy T2	4.057	50	.5913	.0999

Table 11. Paired samples statistics

The study revealed no significant effect of the intervention on common ingroup identity (Sig. = 0.825), ethnic identity (Sig. = 0.314), negative outgroup perception (Sig. = 0.263), trust (Sig. = 0.708) and empathy (Sig. = 0.508). This means that contact-based intervention that involved participants from different ethnic backgrounds coming together to discuss and learn about energy efficiency and sustainability, had no significant influence on the participants’ willingness to develop a positive perception of the ethnic other as well as develop a stronger affiliation to common ingroup identity. This result was expected for this program as it only serves as a first step towards change that needs a longer-term evaluation. In the concluding remarks a detailed explanation is provided.

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Common Ingroup Identity T1 - Common Ingroup Identity T2	.0286	.7568	.1279	-.2314	.2885	.223	50	.825
Pair 2	Ethnic Identity T1 - Ethnic Identity T2	-.1143	.6621	.1119	-.3417	.1131	-1.021	50	.314
Pair 3	Negative Perception T1 - Negative Perception T2	-.07143	.37166	.06282	-.19910	.05624	-1.137	50	.263
Pair 4	Trust T1 - Trust T2	.0309523 80952381	.4855281 95252024	.08206924 4001581	-.13583 238955 3668	.197737 151458 430	.377	50	.708
Pair 5	Empathy T1 - Empathy T2	-.0714	.6318	.1068	-.2885	.1456	-.669	50	.508

Table 12. Paired samples test

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION BASED ON BOTH QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

The initial evidence based on both observation and the given questionnaire suggests that these types of programs indicate a significant improvement of knowledge in regard to energy efficiency, business development, methods of conflict resolution, teamwork and cooperation, communication and toleration. Also, the program gave a chance for the young people to meet likeminded peers. Therefore, there is the assumption that there might be potential for future work related to interethnic relations.

Historical conflicts threaten personal beliefs about goodness in human nature and induce negative feelings that tend to lead to contact avoidance. This study demonstrates a contact intervention that focused on education in the areas of sustainability and energy efficiency and indicates that it could serve as an initial step of contact intervention that potentially could lead to a more positive intergroup relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, various studies have suggested that intergroup contact has been identified as a successful strategy in overcoming negative perceptions about the other ethnic group(s). Indications for a positive outcome might be related to having a common goal towards learning about sustainability in a group environment. Besides the educational aspect of the program, the organizers also actively encouraged the participants to partake in socializing activities where they had time to interact with each other in a more relaxed, unsupervised and informal way.

To summarize, the results of this study indicate that contact-based intervention in forms of education about sustainability do not immediately impact participants desire to restore broken or non-existing relations by creating a common space in which the readiness for coexistence and positive ethnic perception of the other can occur. Therefore, by motivating the youth to engage in daily cross-group interactions and contact while learning about various topics in the country they live in could change more general processes occurring between various conflicting ethnic groups. Ethnographic data indicates that the scope of interaction goes beyond the scheduled program and that 'real' conversations occur between or after sessions, where the participants feel free to interact with each other and open topics related to the past, ethnicity and so on. Therefore, the informal conversations would not happen if the program was not to exist. Moreover, the opportunity to meet gave the participants chances to widen their network. The importance of networking was reinstated on many occasions during the one-on-one interview sessions. The participants realize that only working together can lead to progress. This program can serve as a first step towards this aim.

Such a model might be embraced by other educational initiatives as an example of good practice in the field of potential reconciliation efforts. However, the study has also some limitations present that need additional attention. Further research needs to take place to see if there are any long-term changes, as short-term changes are harder to trace. A larger and more diverse group of participants is needed for the results to be more accurate. Participants' demography should ideally represent all ethnic groups and other nonaffiliated members equally. For this to take into effect we recommend the use of advertising through social media such as Facebook that enables direct targeting of regional areas. Through that way the needed ethnic representatives could be met.

Another recommendation would be to form a database of young people who have taken part in the programs. They could potentially be reinvited to attend other initiatives. Moreover, follow-up activities are necessary to trace changes in participants' behavior towards outgroup members. It is important that the participants feel empowered and important during the overall learning process. Lastly, the programs and the evaluations should be repeated several more times and possibly include additional follow-up activities where the participants would get together in different working environments.

