



SOCIAL COHESION ASSESSMENT REPORT: Tech Heroes Initiative

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¹ All references to Kosovo should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

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ABBREVIATIONS

DTM: Displacement Tracking Matrix

FGDs: Focus Group Discussions

HQ: Headquarter

IOM: International Organization for Migration, United Nations Migration Agency

K-Albanian: Kosovo¹ Albanian

K-Serbian: Kosovo¹ Serbian

LHD: Labour Mobility and Human Development

MPM: Migrant Presence Monitoring

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

RO: Regional Office

DEFINITIONS

SOCIAL COHESION:

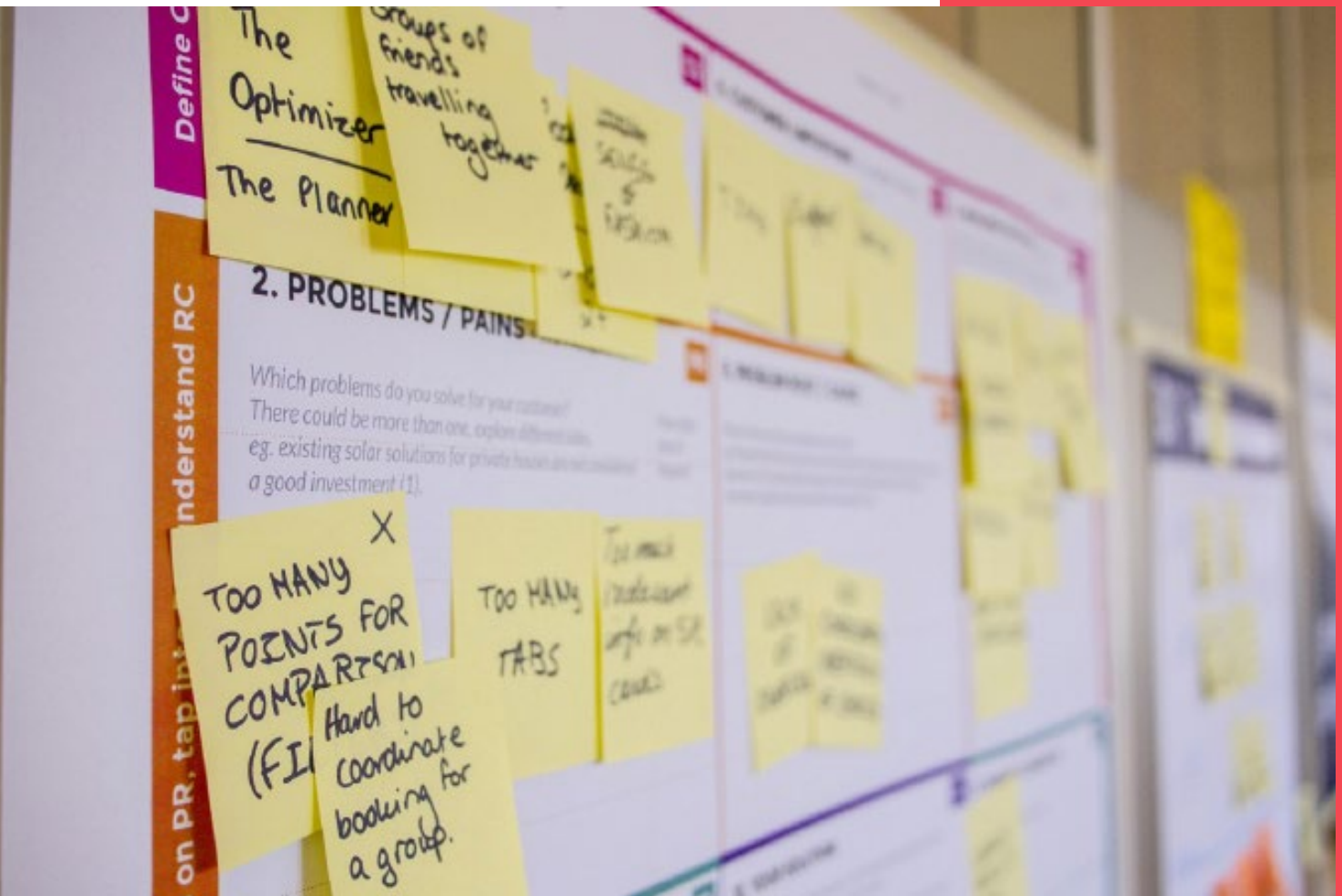
While there is no one universal definition, social cohesion is usually associated with such notions as “solidarity”, “togetherness”, “tolerance” and “harmonious co-existence” and refers to a social order in a specific society or community based on a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities; where the diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued; those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

SOCIAL INCLUSION:

The process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society.

INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY:

A social psychology theory developed in 1954 by Gordon Allport, suggesting that contact between members of different groups (under certain conditions) can work to reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict.



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Executive summary

Since 2016, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been implementing the Social Inclusion Programme (SIP). The objective of this effort is to work towards a more inclusive society for all communities in Kosovo¹ by supporting their language rights, fostering cooperation and joint initiatives, as well as impartial media reporting, thus building confidence between communities and addressing points of friction for long-term reconciliation.²

Within the framework of SIP, IOM has been implementing the Tech Heroes project since 2019. The Tech Heroes project aims at promoting interactions between different ethnic groups and encouraging the youth to solve community problems and challenges through improving the information and communications technology (ICT) skills of teachers and students in both majority and non-majority communities. Apart from creating learning opportunities for the youth, the expectation of Tech Heroes is that intergroup interaction will have a positive impact on participants' perceptions and attitudes towards members of other ethnic groups. This report covers the third edition of Tech Heroes, which started in September 2020 and ended in April 2021.

This report examines changes in social cohesion attitudes of 44 Tech Heroes participants that responded to a baseline questionnaire collected in November 2020 and an endline in April 2021. The analysis relies on observational survey data that inquired about interethnic levels of interaction, trust, attitudes towards coexistence, cohesion and discrimination.

This report also compares perceptions and attitudes of Tech Heroes programme participants with a convenience sample of Kosovo¹ population collected via Facebook Ads.³ This data collection strategy resulted in a sample of 614 responses.

Results from this general population data show that there are existing tensions between ethnic groups associated to negative attitudes towards

getting married, cohabiting in the same buildings and having friends from a different ethnic group. Also, respondents who tend to have more regular interactions with other ethnic groups also report more positive attitudes towards other groups.

Tech Heroes participants data indicates that the logic of Tech Heroes, of creating a space for interaction between different ethnic groups where positive attitudes can develop between ethnic groups, responds to a clear and real barrier that limits the possibility for interethnic reconciliation. Another interesting finding is that a diverse group of participants from various ethnic groups were recruited but there were some challenges to retain some participants across the duration of the programme.

Most of participants were satisfied with the activities. 95 per cent of them reported having a positive experience. Taking stock of the results, Tech Heroes participants' perceptions of their own attitudes and interactions with other ethnic groups changed for the positive considerably more than did their perceptions of how different groups are perceived and interact within society as a whole. At the end of the program, 68 per cent of participants would be willing to share an apartment building with members of other ethnic groups, an increase of 30 percentage points. At the end of the program only ten percent of participants felt uncomfortable with a member of a different ethnic group, a decreased by 28 percentage points compared to the baseline. As for the outcomes that refer the whole society, at the end of programme activities, 25 per cent of participants reported that ethnic groups trust each other, meaning a 14 percentage points increase. The belief that all ethnic groups share equal rights increased by seven percentage points to 83 per cent.

² For more information of SIP, please visit: <https://kosovo.iom.int/si/social-inclusion-projects>.

³ Estimates of the Kosovo¹ population are not necessarily representative of the general population there and were adjusted with weights using 2011 census data to address the convenience sampling approach.

1 INTRODUCTION

As observed in many multi-ethnic countries throughout the world, Kosovo's¹ multi-ethnic character can be a quality of strength, contributing to creativity, resilience and socio-economic growth. However, it may also lead to certain tensions and challenges that run along ethnic lines, resulting in social and political instability that threaten to hamper investment and economic growth, and leading to further ethnic tensions. A critical issue that limits inter-ethnic trust and cooperation in Kosovo¹ is the limited levels of social interactions that take place between members of different ethnic communities, a result at times of geographic divisions, limited language abilities and scarce programmes or events that are designed to promote inter-ethnic interaction and cooperation.

As early as the 1950s, social psychologist Gordon Allport proposed one of the most important social psychological theories of the 20th century, namely he suggested that contact between members of different groups (under certain conditions) can work to reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict. Much of IOM's social cohesion programming in Kosovo¹ is therefore based on what is already known as "inter-group contact theory" (IGCT). Decades of empirical research on IGCT have indicated that, within the appropriate conditions, programmes that facilitate and encourage contact and engagement between members of different groups within a community can significantly improve participants' perceptions and attitudes towards other groups and enhance inter-group trust and cooperation.⁴ Rooted in the field of social psychology, intergroup contact can be distinguished from other approaches that target only one group at a time (such as intercultural or empathy trainings), public awareness-raising campaigns where interpersonal contact is absent, or more problem-oriented interventions like intergroup dialogue in protracted conflict situations. IGCT interventions can be applied in a variety of thematic areas and contexts that lend themselves for bringing together people from different backgrounds in a non-hierarchical and cooperative environment, in order to reduce intergroup prejudice and build empathy between advantaged and disadvantaged groups.

KEY CONDITIONS FOR POSITIVE EFFECTS OF INTERGROUP CONTACT (ALLPORT):

- Equal group status within the contact situation
- Actively work towards common goal(s)
- Intergroup cooperation
- Support and sanctions by authorities (or law or custom)

In more recent academic literature on intergroup contact, there is ample empirical evidence that, if certain conditions are met, positive contact between individuals of different groups in society are more likely to improve relations between those groups.⁵ This is true across all settings, in all countries, and with various categories of out-group (ethnicity, disability, sexuality, age). One of the theoretical bases of this link is Allport's contact hypothesis, which establishes four conditions for positive intergroup experiences and outcomes.⁶

Research has also revealed that this positive effect of contact can be picked up second-hand – that is, if a friend had positive interactions with an out-group, then this also affects the attitude towards that out-group of an individual despite differences.⁷

Backed by these volumes of academic research and concrete positive results of applying the intergroup contact theory, since 2016, IOM has

⁴ More information on this project: <https://kosovo.iom.int/si/social-inclusion-projects>.

⁵ Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(5), 751–783. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751>.

⁶ Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge/Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

⁷ Schmid, K., Hewstone, M., Küpper, B., Zick, A. and Wagner, U. (2012) Secondary transfer effects of intergroup contact: A cross-national comparison in Europe. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 75 (1):28–51. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0190272511430235>.



been actively implementing the project “Building Societal Connections and support to reconciliation and social cohesion in Kosovo”.⁸ This project has three main components:

- » Language learning: Fostering learning of official languages and promoting importance of multilingualism for social cohesion in Kosovo.¹
- » Future Generations: Improving trust and increasing positive feelings between community groups in Kosovo¹ through meaningful joint interaction at the youth and family level.
- » Building capacities for Media: Increased access to information and perspectives of different groups, supporting impartial reporting and content exchange.

Framed within the second component, IOM has been implementing Tech Heroes programme since 2019. The programme aims to foment interaction between ethnic communities of young people of Kosovo through a competition to solve local community problems using technology, as well as providing participants with not only information and communications technology (ICT) trainings, but also opportunity to develop other skills relevant to the labour market needs. The expectation of Tech Heroes is that this interaction will have a positive impact on participants’ perceptions and attitudes towards members of other ethnic groups. With almost half of its population under the age of 25, the youth are among the key actors to promote and improve social cohesion across ethnic groups. However, youth has few opportunities for inter-ethnic interaction due to an education system segregated along ethnic lines⁹ and limited opportunities to learn the languages spoken by different ethnic groups.¹⁰

The objective of this report is twofold: First, to assess changes in terms of social cohesion attitudes of Tech Heroes participants and second, to compare perceptions and attitudes of programme participants

with non-participants within the broader Kosovo¹ population. More specifically, this report assesses the third cohort of Tech Heroes, conducted between 27 September 2020 and 1 April 2021.¹¹ Data to analyse changes of programme participants was collected early in the implementation of the programme, from 7 November and 22 December 2020, and right after it ended, from 31 March to 1 April 2021. For the second objective, data of the broader Kosovo¹ population was collected between 30 March to 19 July 2021. The research is based on survey data designed to collect information of respondents’ history of interaction with other ethnic communities, level of engagement in social inclusion programmes, opinions towards other communities in Kosovo¹, as well as perception towards the government’s treatment of ethnic groups and reconciliation.

After this introduction, the report describes the Tech Heroes programme¹², including its goals, activities, assumptions, and outcomes. Then, the report moves on to describing the methodological approach, including how data was collected and the content of the questionnaires. Lastly, the results section is divided in four parts. The first one sheds light on attitudes towards other ethnic groups using data from a non-representative population survey. The second one focuses on participant selection to observe the degree of diversity in terms of ethnicity and any possible self-selection bias among participants that already have positive attitudes towards other ethnic groups. This is relevant because it will assess the extent to which the programme might have accepted applicants that tended to hold more positive attitudes towards outgroups (compared to the convenience population sample) even prior to their participation. The third section looks at the subjective assessment of the implementation of Tech Heroes by participants. The final section compares changes in social cohesion attitudes and trust among ethnic groups of programme participants between an early stage of programme implementation and after activities were completed. Although population estimates were adjusted with population weights results in this report cannot be extrapolated to the rest of the population of Kosovo¹ due to the limited sample size and the convenience sampling strategy that involved using Facebook Ads.

⁸ For additional information on IOM projects in Kosovo¹, please see: https://kosovo.iom.int/sites/default/files/Publications/Social%20Inclusion%20Assessment%20Report-2020_ENG%20%281%29.pdf.

⁹ The education system has developed two segregated and parallel systems of education, one for K-Albanians and another for K-Serbian. OSCE. (2009). Kosovo non-majority communities within the primary and secondary educational systems. Department of Human Rights and Communities. Available at: www.osce.org/kosovo/36978.

¹⁰ According to a representative survey of Kosovar youth between the ages of 14 and 29, a third of young Albanians and half of young Serbians believe there is no need to learn the language of the other ethnic group. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. (2019). Youth Study Kosovo 2018/2019. Available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15264.pdf>.

¹¹ First edition of Tech Heroes was implemented in 2019, and the second one in 2020.

¹² You can find more information about Tech Heroes here: <http://tech-heroes.org/>.

2 TECH HEROES

Implemented since 2019, Tech Heroes¹³ is an innovative initiative that, on one side, creates opportunities for meaningful interaction among youth from different communities, and on another, equips them with skills to address community challenges using technology. The project was designed by the IOM Mission in Kosovo¹ and operated by a private ICT academy.¹⁴ The programme is targeted to participants between 15 and 24 years of age. Tech Heroes relies on the ICT sector as a common denominator to bring different communities together, enabling a consistent and prolonged engagement to improve trust and increase positive perceptions between communities.

The third cohort of the Tech Heroes programme operated as follows. Programme implementation and the interaction with participants was done by three trainers and two assistant trainers. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities were conducted mostly online.

Potential participants applied through an online form that inquired about their motivation to participate. Selected applicants were those that expressed an interest in developing their knowledge and skills in technology and have a desire to contribute to their communities. Programme trainers selected the most motivated students within specified ethnic group quotas to guarantee diverse participation of different groups. The call for applicants was promoted through social media, mostly Facebook, from 1 August to 26 September 2020. Civil society groups assisted in promoting the programme.¹⁵ In total, from 356 prospective participants that applied, 175 were selected.

After participants were selected, the programme consisted of six phases including an onboarding session on 27 September. Phase one started officially on 1 October 2020. In phases one and two, participants learned ICT skills and, through design thinking workshops, they identified a local problem of the community and how it could be addressed through ICT tools. The participants had to attend at least 85 per cent of the sessions in the first phase (General Training in Technology) to progress to the next phase. As seen in Table 1 in the column “Active participants”, 41 participants were disqualified due to this reason. In the second phase, participants were divided into 18 teams from diverse ethnic backgrounds and interest in topics¹⁶ and with a maximum of seven members to a team. In the third phase - the Specialized Training, sessions focused on increasing ICT skills of the participants and defining a local problem in their communities, to envision a functional, feasible and practical ICT solution, to be implemented. There was live translation in the online training meetings. The teams that made it to the next phases participated in a specialized ICT training and planning and team building exercises. After the planning, the groups had two and a half months to materialise their ideas. In the final phase of Tech Heroes, a professional jury awarded the team that had the best results in an event in which all teams presented their projects.

Active participation in the programme fell in phase three (Specialized Training), due to the end of the school year as seen in Table 1 in the column “Active participants.” Most of the participants are students and many prioritised exams and schoolwork. In that phase the active number of participants declined to 85, and it was decided to invite new participants that raised the number of active participants to 110.

¹³ For additional information about the programme, please consult this website: <http://tech-heroes.org/en>.

¹⁴ Please find more information of the academy here: <https://j-coders.com/per-ne/>.

¹⁵ Some of the organisations include Radio Kosova, Open Data Kosovo, Trust Building Platform and local magazines.

¹⁶ Environment, health and wellbeing, COVID response, education, art, tourism, youth empowerment.

Table 1: Tech Heroes 3rd cohort phases, objectives, duration and number of participants

Phase	Objective	Date/duration	Active participants
0. Onboarding session	Inform students of Tech Heroes programme in detail, the level of commitment and meeting the trainers.	27.09.2020. 2 hours	175
1. General Training in Technology	Participants are trained with basic programming knowledge in web development. During the training, Tech Heroes mentors assess participants' commitment and actual interest in participating in the programme.	01.10.20 – 03.11.20. One month	175
2. Design Thinking	18 teams are formed. Students are trained in solving problems through Design Thinking methodology. They tackle a problem in their community and think of an idea that will contribute to solving that problem. Only the best ideas can continue to the next phase.	02.11.20 – 06.11.20. One week	136
3. Specialized training	Advanced training in specialized software including social media, Business Development, User experience and design interface (UI UX), Adobe Illustrator, and FireBase (platforms to develop applications).	09.11.20 – 08.01.21. Two months	110
4. Agile Methodology training	Use of collaborative and organizational tools such as GitLab. Students prepare for the next phase, where they undertake roles and responsibilities in project implementation.	11.01.21 – 15.01.21. One week	110
5. Implementation Phase	Participants are required to behave similarly to a job environment, they have to attend planning meetings and take on tasks and responsibilities. Each member of the team has a specific role, and specific tasks to execute in order to ensure that the team will deliver the final project.	18.01.21 – 31.03.21. Two and a half months	106
6. Final competition	The teams that are successful in creating functional project will be part of the final competition, their project will be assessed by a professional jury.	01.04.21. One day	106 ¹⁷

¹⁷ In this phase 25 participants left the programme and the team decided to open the second call for applications to replace these vacancies. Participants reported that they had to leave the programme due to commitments with the school.

As a result of the trainings and competitions, Tech Heroes initiative expects to improve the technical capacities of its participants and build confidence between young people from different ethnic groups. A diagram describing the Theory of Change of the project is shown in Annex 1. The main expected results from Tech Heroes are the following:

- » Increased level of social interaction between members of different ethnic groups.
- » Improved trust and increased positive feelings between community groups.
- » Fostered cooperation and joint initiatives, thus building confidence between communities and addressing points of friction for long-term reconciliation.
- » Strengthened interethnic reconciliation between participants.
- » Engaged youth in solving community challenges through technological creations.

This report aims to assess the extent to which Tech Heroes achieved its expected results related to building trust between different ethnic groups. The next sections describe the methodology used to assess the programme, the data collected, and the main findings of the evaluation.

3 METHODOLOGY

The IOM Mission in Kosovo¹ partnered with IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) and an academic advisor from the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences from the University of Massachusetts – Amherst.¹⁸ IOM Kosovo¹, in coordination with GMDAC, prepared the questionnaire, which was then analyzed by GMDAC with support from the academic advisor.

The questionnaire served to collect data about the following issues:

- » Demographic data
- » Degree of social interaction between ethnic groups
- » Attitudes towards other groups: statements that provide insights about the opinion of members of one group towards the other
- » Trust between ethnic groups, perceptions on the treatment of ethnic groups by the authorities and within the law, and reconciliation
- » General level of satisfaction of participants with the Tech Heroes programme

The questionnaire key questions are included in this report as Annex 2. Depending on the ethnic group of the respondent, the questionnaire would change to ask specific questions for the other groups. The questions for K-Serbians asked about attitudes on K-Albanians and other non-majority ethnic communities. Questions for K-Albanians asked about K-Serbians and other non-majority communities. When the respondent reported to belong to a different group other than K-Serbians or K-Albanians, the questions asked about attitudes towards K-Serbians and K-Albanian.

¹⁸ Professor Dr. Linda Tropp. See her profile here: <https://www.lindatropp.com>.

To assess the extent to which Tech Heroes strengthened trust and positive perceptions between different ethnic groups, IOM adapted a contribution analysis method which is an approach “used to identify the contribution that an intervention has made to a change or set of changes”.¹⁹ IOM divided the evaluation into four main steps:

1. Describe the problem that the project intends to solve and determine the specific evaluation questions to be addressed. This is described in the section above.
2. Develop a theory of change or the logic/results chain describing how the programme is supposed to achieve its goals which is shown in Annex 1. This theory describes the pathways, defines the indicators, and sets the plausible association between the activities of the project and its results.
3. Gather evidence to inform the theory of change (see Data section)
4. Assemble and assess the contribution of the project to promote social cohesion among participants (see Section 5 “Results”).

Box 1: Attribution vs Contribution

It is worth mentioning that, due to a number of contextual constraints (small sample sizes, difficulty in implementing an experimental or quasi-experimental design, and plausible selection biases), the findings described in this report should be interpreted as an indication of the potential effects of the Tech Heroes initiative in promoting positive change in social attitudes and perceptions. As mentioned above, this study adapted a contribution analysis²⁰ to test all the hypotheses of the Theory of Change (ToC) of the project:

- » If the ICT trainings and design thinking workshops occurred, did the participants come from diverse ethnic groups?
- » If the participants came from diverse ethnic groups, did participants from diverse groups actually interact with each other over the course of the programme?
- » If participants from diverse ethnic groups interacted during the project, did participation in the programme increase positive attitudes between ethnic communities and perceptions that diverse communities can trust each other?
- » If participation in the programme increased positive attitudes between ethnic communities and perceptions of trust between communities, did these effects persist long after participation in the programme?
- » If participants’ positive attitudes towards other ethnic communities and perceptions of trust increased and persisted after participating in the programme, then it can be assumed that the project, among other factors, contributed to strengthening interethnic reconciliation.

¹⁹ BetterEvaluation. (n.d.). Contribution Analysis. Available at: www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/contribution_analysis.

²⁰ Better Evaluation. (n.d.). Contribution Analysis. Available at: www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/contribution_analysis.

4 DATA

Data was collected for two samples: Tech Heroes participants and a convenience population sample in Kosovo¹. Details of the data collected for the two groups are described below. For both groups, responses were collected using online tools that were based on a quantitative close-ended questionnaire. In addition, to test the hypothesis of the project bringing different ethnic groups together, administrative data about the number of selected participants and their background was used to assess whether this assumption was correct.

4.1 Selected participants of Tech Heroes programme:

All Tech Heroes participants were invited to respond to an online survey early in programme implementation (first round) and after activities were completed (final round). Out of 136 programme participants that made it to the second phase of Tech Heroes (“Design Thinking”), a total of 82 responded to the first round of the survey which was conducted between 7 November and 22 December 2020 using Office 365 platform. The final round was conducted after the final phase ended on 31 March and 1 April 2021, for the participants that graduated from Tech Heroes, using Qualtrics. Out of 106 participants that finished the programme, 68 responded to the final questionnaire. Both rounds of questionnaires asked the same questions about perceptions and relations towards other ethnic groups. The net sample, or the respondents that answered both to the first and last rounds, is 44. Although there were more respondents, these 44 correspond to the ones that the research team was able to identify across rounds. As mentioned in the section explaining the inner working of Tech Heroes, the fact that some participants left Tech Heroes during its implementation and new ones were accepted to participate part way through explains the discrepancy of total respondents across the first and final rounds, and the net sample, as reflected in Table 2 below.

4.1.1 *Convenience population sample of Kosovo¹*

To assess any differences in attitude between Tech Heroes participants and the overall population, an online survey was implemented via Qualtrics and promoted via Facebook Ads. It is important to note that data was collected with a convenience sampling strategy and thus, it cannot be considered representative of the general population in Kosovo¹. This survey was open from 30 March to 19 July 2021 to any person in Kosovo¹ older than 18 years. K-Albanian, K-Serbian, and other non-majority ethnic communities responded to the survey. There were a total of **614 respondents** that completed at least 75 per cent of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Tech Heroes 3rd cohort phases, objectives, duration and number of participants

Demographics		Convenience sample of population (unweighted)		Programme participants – First round		Programme participants – Final round		Programme participants – net sample	
		Total	Share (%)	Total	Share (%)	Total	Share (%)	Total	Share (%)
Sex	Female	212	35%	18	22%	27	40%	16	36%
	Male	351	57%	64	78%	39	57%	28	64%
	Other	51	8%	0	0%	2	3%	0	0%
Age	15-17	29	5%	48	59%	35	51%	26	59%
	18-24	99	16%	34	41%	26	38%	18	41%
	25-50	325	53%	0	0%	5	7%	0	0%
	>50	119	19%	0	0%	2	3%	0	0%
Ethnicity	K-Albanians	363	59%	55	67%	56	82%	41	91%
	K-Serbians	119	19%	27	33%	3	4%	1	2%
	K-minorities	132	21%	0	0%	9	13%	3	7%
Education	None	52	8%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	Primary	44	7%	22	27%	32	47%	26	59%
	Secondary	102	17%	51	62%	11	16%	7	16%
	Tertiary	416	68%	9	11%	23	34%	11	25%
Perception of current income	Living comfortably	430	70%	/	/	59	87%	40	91%
	Finding it difficult	124	20%	/	/	6	9%	2	5%
	Don't know	11	2%	/	/	3	4%	2	4%
Total number of respondents		614		82		68		44	

Note: Totals do not add up to 100 per cent because a respondent may not have responded to all questions. Missing data is not shown for simplicity.
Source: IOM survey 2020-2021.

4.2 Demographic characteristics of the two samples

The following section presents demographic characteristics of the two samples collected: beneficiaries of the Tech Heroes Programme and convenience population sample. Participant information includes all respondents that participated in the first round (82 observations), the second (68 observations) and the ones that respond to both rounds (44 observations). The table includes information about sex, age, ethnicity, education and perception of current household income. For the sake of simplicity, some of the missing values are not shown.

As the data shows, for the convenience population sample, most are male (57%), between 25 and 50 years old (53%), and are K-Albanians (59%) while fewer are K-Serbians (19%). Almost two thirds have some tertiary education (68%), and one fifth (20%) reported having a difficult time with their current income. As for the programme participants that responded both to the first and second samples (net sample), most are male (64%), between 15 and 17 years old (59%), a great majority of them are K-Albanians (91%), and most of them report living comfortably with their current household income (91%). Regarding their educational attainment, 41 per cent of participants had completed at least their secondary education.

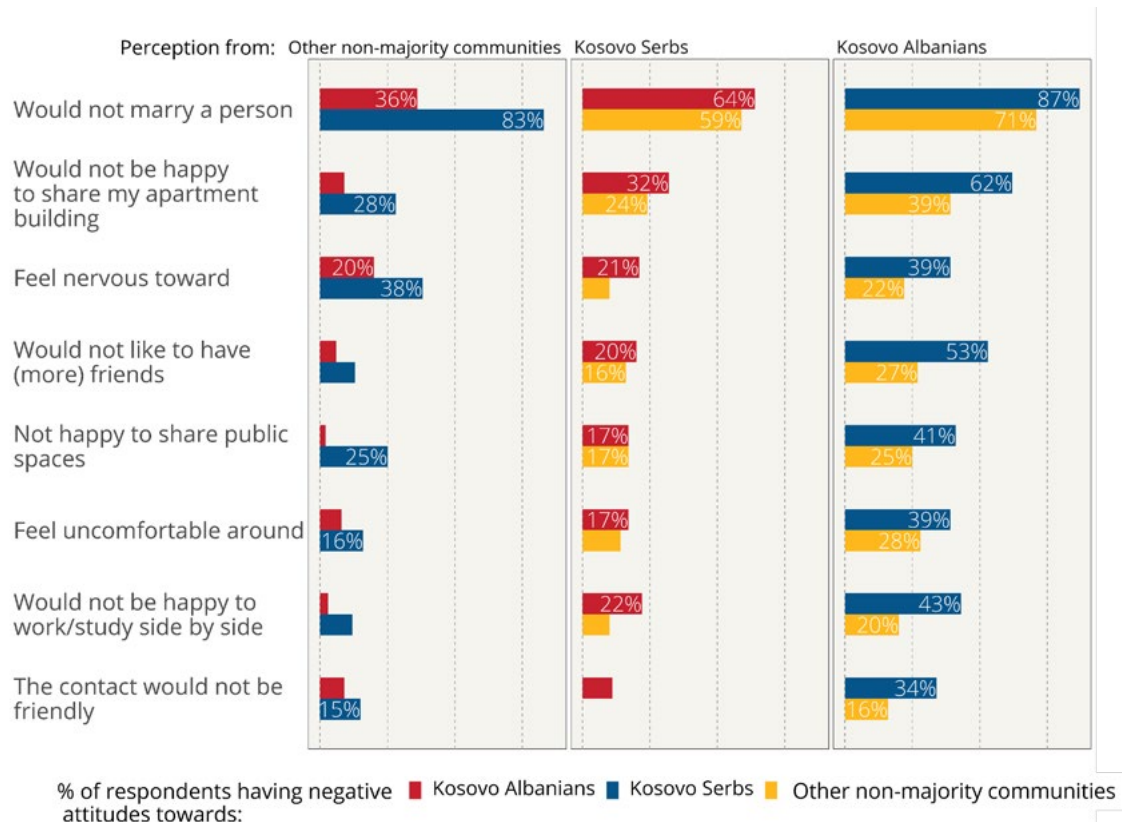
5 RESULTS

This section presents the main findings of the analysis conducted by IOM. It is divided into the following sections. Section 5.1 **“Attitudes between ethnic groups in Kosovo¹”** presents the perceptions and sentiments of the population sample towards other ethnic groups. Its objective is to get a diagnostic of the level of tensions between communities that Tech Heroes aims to address. Section 5.2 **“Assessment of the selection of the participants”** assesses whether the selection of project participants to the project was biased towards people that are more likely to be open-minded towards social reconciliation between ethnic groups. Then, section 5.3 **“Assessment of the implementation of Tech Heroes”** aims to evaluate subjective levels of satisfaction of participants towards the activities of the project. Finally, section 5.4 **“Contribution of Tech Heroes to improve trust and increase positive feelings between community groups”** presents the findings of the analysis of the changes in attitudes of the participants between an early stage of the project implementation and after the project was completed.

5.1 Attitudes between ethnic groups in Kosovo¹

The main objective of this section is to assess the level of tensions between ethnic groups in Kosovo¹ and, in particular, to assess the perception of the sampled population towards other ethnic communities and their levels of interaction. The participants of the survey responded to eight statements that provide insights about the attitudes between different communities regarding social interactions on different levels in the private and public spheres. These statements also aimed to assess whether either of the communities are comfortable around other ethnic groups or willing to marry someone of a different ethnicity in Kosovo¹. To capture the perceptions towards other ethnic groups, the answers were transformed into a positive or negative attitude in a way that comparisons and aggregations could be conducted.

Figure 1. Social cohesion attitudes towards ethnic groups by ethnicity



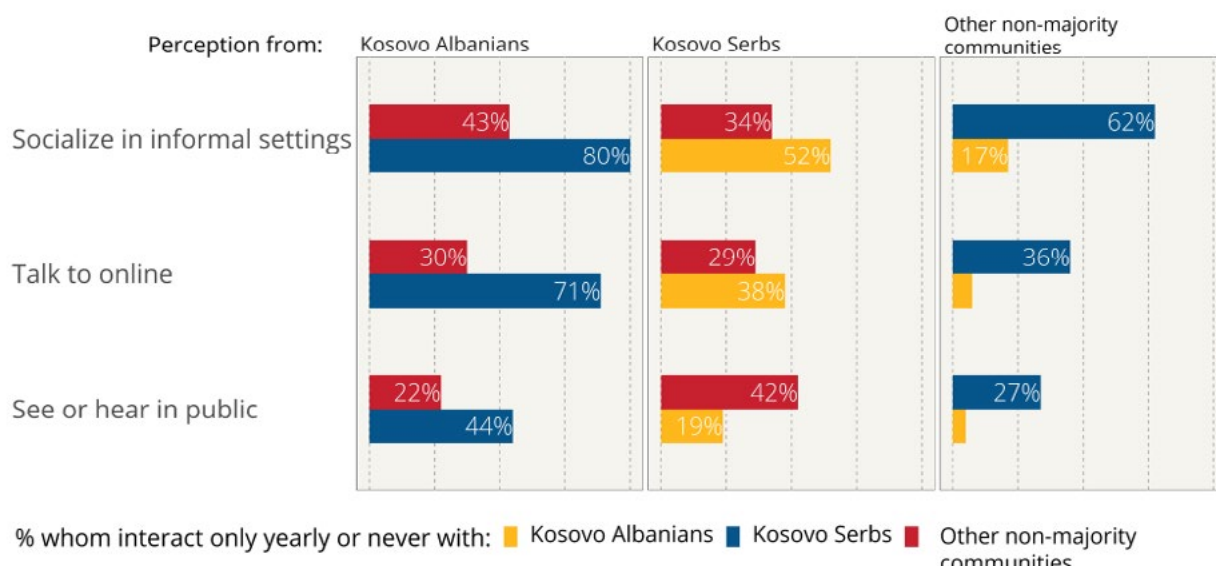
Source: IOM Kosovo¹ weighted population sample 2020-2021 | N=614 | Analysis: GMDAC
 Note: Non-Majority Communities include Bosniaks, Turkish, Askhali, Egyptian, Gorani, and Roma.

Results of the analysis confirmed existing tensions between ethnic groups. According to the convenience population sample data, although most of the respondents do not have negative attitudes towards other ethnic groups, as seen in Figure 1, K-Albanians report greater negative attitudes towards K-Serbians in all the eight questions of social cohesion. The issues where most K-Albanians hold negative attitudes towards K-Serbians are related to getting married, cohabitating in the same building, and having them as friends.

When looking at K-Serbians, K-Albanians and other non-majority groups (including Bosniaks, Turkish, Askhali, Egyptian, Gorani, and Roma), results also suggest more negative attitudes towards interactions in the private sphere (marriage, cohabitation in the same building), whereas for issues associated with interaction in the public sphere (work or study, share public spaces) attitudes are less negative. Against this background, there is low acceptance across ethnic groups in Kosovo¹: about 9 out of 10 K-Albanians would not marry a person from the K-Serbian community and 6 out of 10 K-Serbians would not marry a K-Albanian. Moreover, 62 per cent of K-Albanians would not feel happy sharing their apartment building with a K-Serbian, and 28 per cent of people from other non-majority communities feel nervous around K-Serbians.

Regarding the level of interaction across ethnic groups, as presented in Figure 2, about 8 out of 10 K-Albanians never meet with K-Serbians in informal social meetings, 3 out of 10 K-Serbians never talk online to a person from other non-majority community, and about 3 out of 10 people from other non-majority communities never see or hear a K-Serbian in public. Overall, other non-majority communities appear to be the most comfortable with other groups but more so with K-Albanian than K-Serbian and this aligns with their greater exposure to K-Albanians. K-Serbians appear to be more comfortable with K-Albanians than vice versa which, again, also aligns with greater levels of interaction and exposure.

Figure 2. Respondents' degree of interaction with different ethnic groups

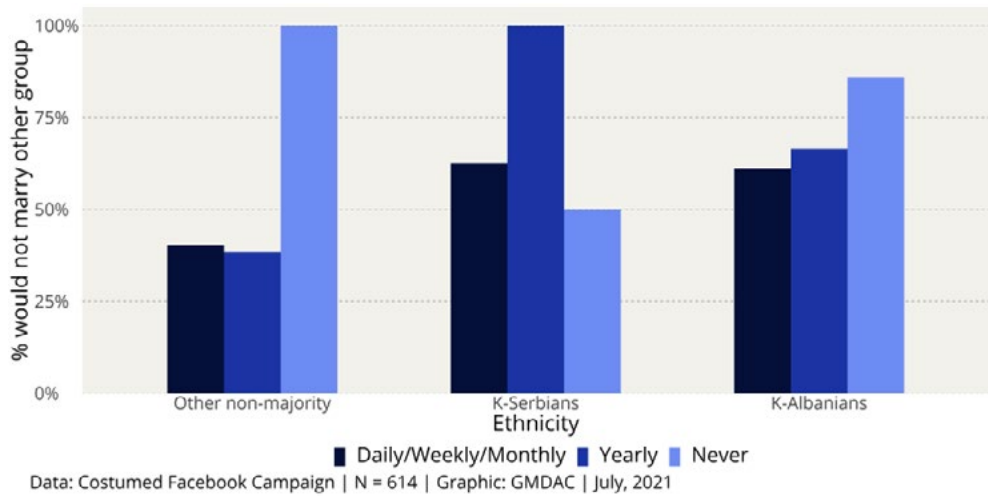


Source: IOM Kosovo¹ weighted population sample 2020-2021 | N=614 | Analysis: GMDAC

Note: Non-Majority Communities include Bosniaks, Turkish, Askhali, Egyptian, Gorani, and Roma.

Another key assumption of Tech Heroes is that the tensions between groups are associated, in part, with the lack of interaction between communities in their daily lives which strengthens the negative stereotypes towards the other groups. As can be seen in Figure 3, the assumption of the lack of interaction seems to be correct for K-Albanians and other non-majority ethnic groups but not for K-Serbians: Those who tend to have more regular interactions with other ethnic groups also have more positive attitudes towards inter-ethnic marriage.

Figure 3. Share of those who would not get married with a member of another ethnic group by respondents' ethnic group and degree of interaction with different ethnic groups



Source: IOM Kosovo¹ weighted population sample 2020-2021 | N=614 | Analysis: GMDAC

The general population data analysis results showed lack of interaction between ethnic groups and remaining ethnic tensions. This finding confirms the constraints faced by the people to overcome the ethnic tensions and the Tech Heroes project problem statement. **This evidence suggests that, Tech Heroes' logic, of creating a space for interaction between different ethnic groups in Kosovo¹ where positive attitudes can increase between ethnic groups, responds to a clear and real barrier that limits the possibility for interethnic reconciliation in Kosovo.¹**

5.2 Assessment of the selection of the participants

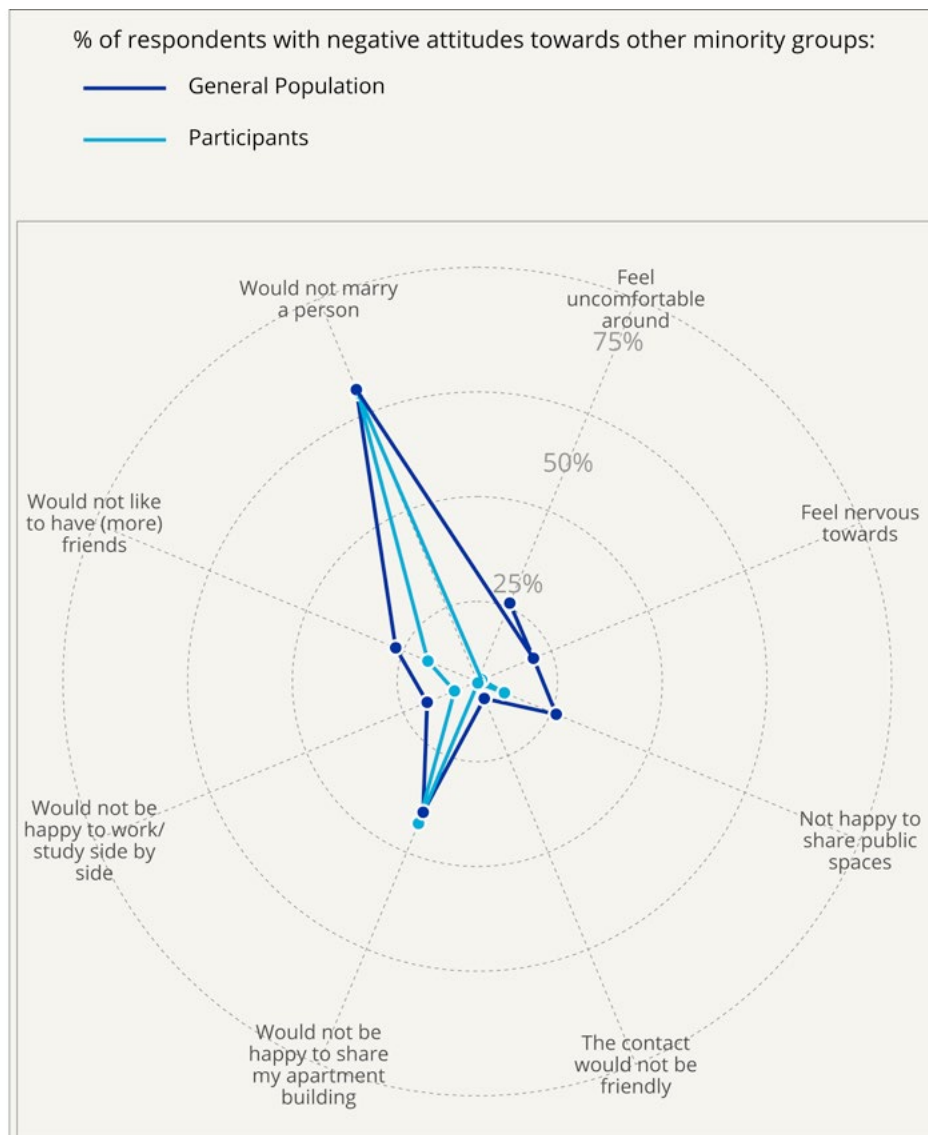
This section presents the results of the assessment of differences in attitudes towards other ethnicities between Tech Heroes participants using data from the first round and the sample of Kosovo¹ population.

Since Tech Heroes was designed as a space in which people from different ethnic groups could interact with each other, it is likely that the applicants to the project would be more open minded towards ethnic reconciliation than the convenience population sample. Testing this hypothesis is key to interpret the results of this study. If the applicants had indeed a higher positive sentiment towards other communities it would imply that the application to the project was biased towards the proportion of the population who are more open to interethnic reconciliation in the first place and, therefore, the observed contribution of the project to enhance trust between communities could potentially be overestimating the effectiveness of the project to meet its objectives. As mentioned in Section 2, selected applicants displayed special interest in helping their community and improving their technical skills. This motivation and characteristics of selected participants might be associated with positive attitudes to social cohesion.

5.2.1 Difference in attitudes between the convenience population sample and the selected participants before Tech Heroes

As depicted in Figure 4 below, using data from the first round, **the selected participants of Tech Heroes have similar attitudes towards other communities as the general population.** This shows that the selection of project participants was not necessarily biased towards people more open to social reconciliation in Kosovo¹ or with a more positive sentiment towards other communities prior to their engagement in the programme.

Figure 4. Attitudes towards other minority groups by convenience population sample and Tech Heroes participants



Source: IOM Kosovo¹ weighted population sample and baseline participants sample 2020-2021 | N=614 | Analysis: GMDAC

5.2.2 Ethnicity of the selected participants at the beginning and end of the programme

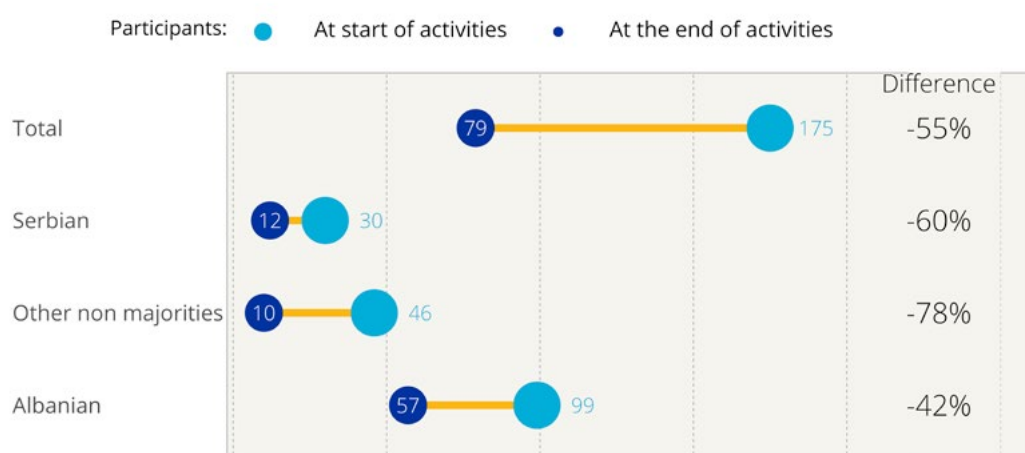
From 175 initial participants, 96 have not completed the programme. 27 new participants entered during the programme, meaning that 106 participants completed it. This means that 79 participants did the complete programme from start to finish. Although participation across all ethnic groups decreased, in comparison to K-Albanians, K-Serbians and other minority groups tended to leave Tech Heroes in higher rates. 42 per cent of K-Albanians in comparison to 60 per cent of K-Serbians left the programme. Although more research is needed to understand the reasons for drop out rates, many participants across all ethnic groups were not able to continue in the programme due to school commitments. Possibly, limited access to internet for students might also have played a role in the drop out rates, combined with the overlap of the end of the school term and beginning of the holiday season.

5.3 Subjective assessment of the implementation of Tech Heroes by participants

The objective of this section is to evaluate the extent to which activities of Tech Heroes achieved their objectives as expected and assess the level of satisfaction of participants. Participants that completed the programme were asked about their perceptions and opinions in relation to the activities and trainings offered by the project.

As shown in Figure 6 below, nine out of ten participants of Tech Heroes enjoyed or had a very positive opinion of their overall experience during the project. When asked whether they would recommend the project to a friend, 100 per cent affirmed that they would do so. In terms of their perception of Tech Heroes being a facilitator for building trust between communities, 6 out of 10 participants think that participating in the project does increase the positive sentiments and trust towards other ethnic groups. Although participants report a very good experience, for a more comprehensive analysis it would be recommended to compile feedback from participants who did not complete the programme as well.

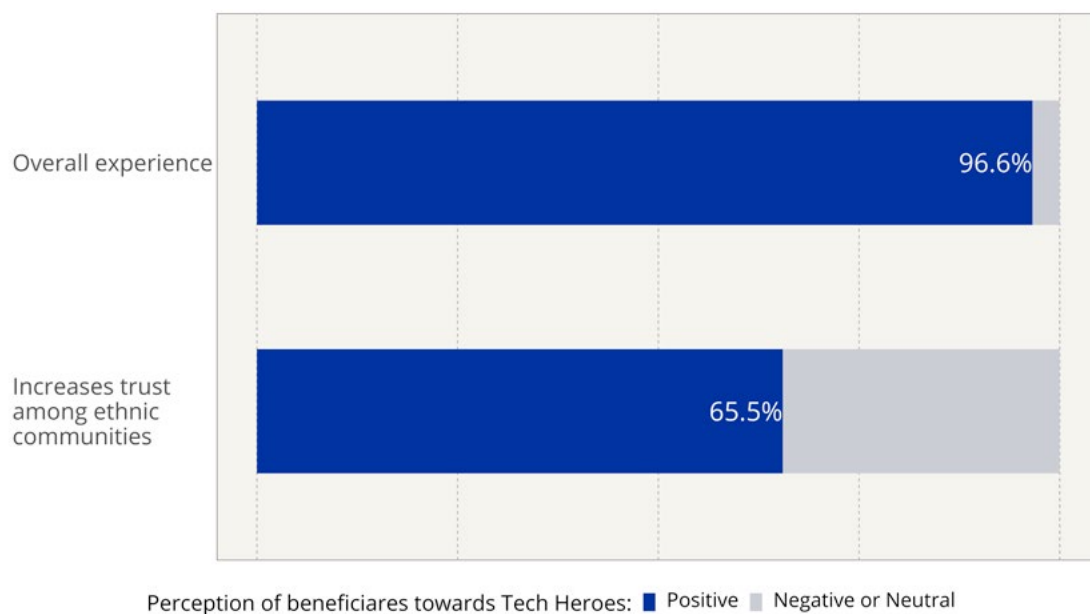
Figure 3. Ethnic distribution of participants when Tech Heroes started and ended.



Source: Tech Heroes admin data 2020-2021 | Analysis: GMDAC

Figure 4 below illustrates that participants of Tech Heroes have similar attitudes towards other communities as the general population (using data from the first round). This shows that the selection of project participants was not necessarily biased towards people more open to social reconciliation in Kosovo¹ or with a more positive sentiment towards other communities prior to their engagement in the programme.

Figure 4. Positive perception towards Tech Heroes programme



Source: IOM Kosovo¹ survey 2020-2021 | N Participants= 68 | Anaysis: GMDAC

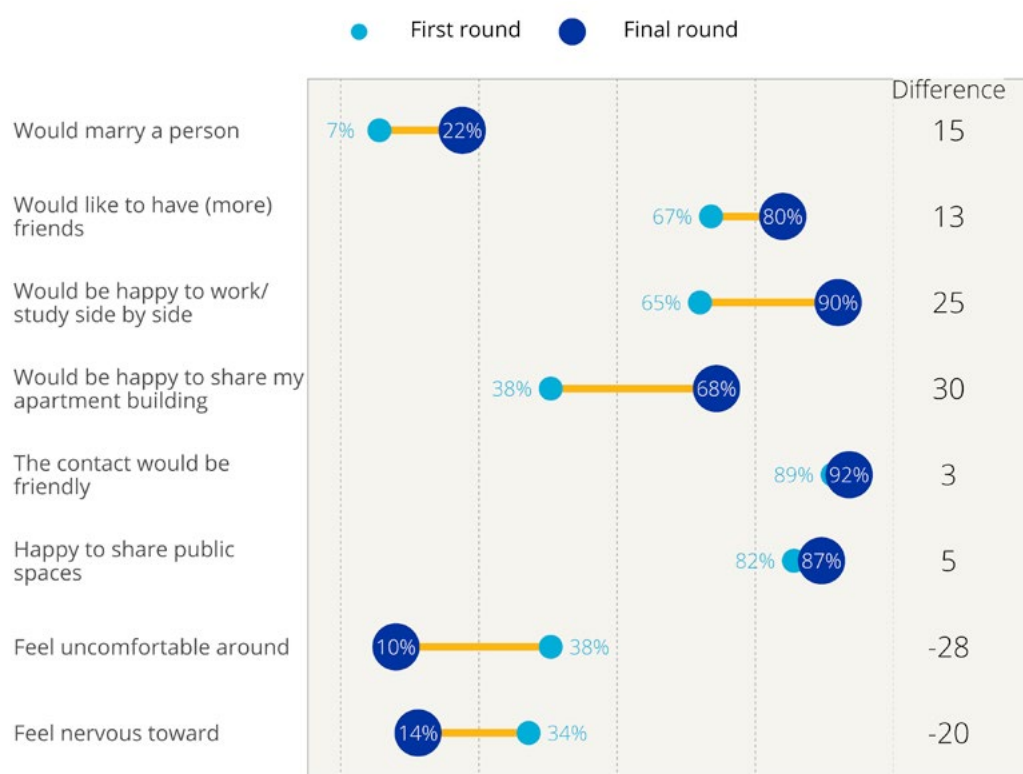
5.4 Contribution of Tech Heroes to improve trust and increasing positive feelings between community groups

This section presents changes in social cohesion attitudes of Tech Heroes participants across the implementation of the programme. In general, most participants reported more tolerant intergroup attitudes.²¹

²¹ Results from this section should be interpreted carefully given that some respondents that did not complete the Tech Heroes programme did not participate in the questionnaire.

Figure 7 below shows that overall, attitudes of K-Albanians towards K-Serbians were more positive in the final round in all of the eight dimensions established to assess the level of social cohesion. K-Albanians increased their positive attitudes towards K-Serbians in terms of getting married, having more friends, sharing the same dwelling, sharing public space, and feeling comfortable around them. The biggest differences can be observed on the proportion of participants who would be willing to cohabit in the same building with other ethnic groups (31 percentage point increase). It is possible that, given the increased interaction in similar spaces and online between these two ethnic groups during the course of the programme, participants might have increased their positive attitudes towards one another.

Figure 7. Changes in perception from K-Albanians toward K-Serbians



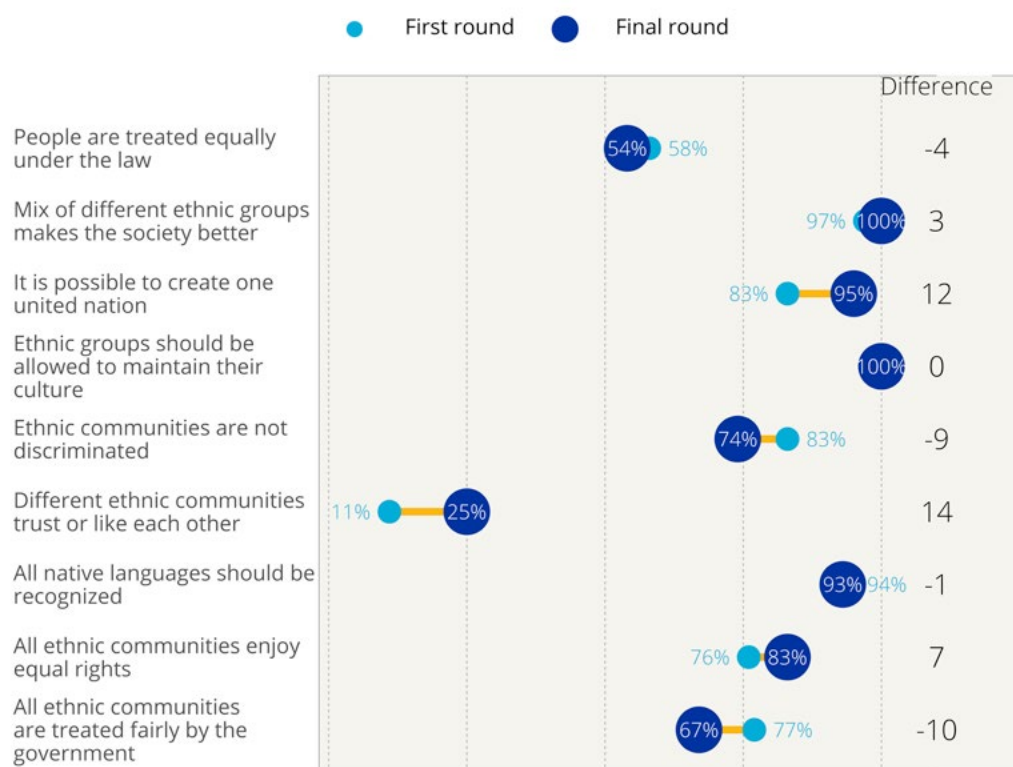
Source: IOM Kosovo¹ survey 2020-2021 | Net sample=40 | Analysis: GMDAC

The research also inquired about participants' attitudes towards perceptions of discrimination to ethnic groups by the authorities, society and law, interethnic trust, and attitudes towards cooperation and peaceful coexistence. Overall, the results in Figure 8 show that participants increased their levels of trust towards other ethnic groups and increased their belief that it is possible to cooperate and coexist in a multi-ethnic society. Moreover, they reported an increase in the awareness that society and institutions may discriminate based on ethnic belonging.

The belief that different ethnic groups trust one another increased by 14 percentage points and, by the end of the programme, one out of every four participants believed that ethnic communities trust one another. As for the belief that it is possible to coexist in a multi-ethnic society, this increased by 12 percentage points and almost all the participants shared that belief. Regarding perceptions of discrimination by the institutions towards ethnic communities, after the programme, although there was a decrease of ten percentage points, two thirds of the participants believed that the institutions treat all ethnic communities fairly. It appears that Tech Heroes participants report an increase in trust between ethnic groups while simultaneously increasing their awareness that there might be structural factors at the social and institutional levels that hinder efforts to overcome the division of Kosovo¹ society along ethnic lines.

One key finding from the data is that participants' perceptions of their own attitudes and interactions with other ethnic groups changed (for the positive) considerably more than did their perceptions of how different groups are perceived and interact within society as a whole. In other words, encouraging positive inter-group contact in this activity does appear to have positive effects on participants' attitudes and perceptions towards other ethnic groups as a whole; however, its effects on people's perceptions of social dynamics between groups more broadly appear more muted. These findings are in line with studies assessing the effects of inter-group contact in other contexts.²²

Figure 8. Changes in overall perceptions across survey rounds



Source: IOM Kosovo¹ survey 2020-2021 | Net sample = 44 | Analysis: GMDAC

Source: IOM Kosovo¹ survey 2020-2021 | Net sample=44 | Analysis: GMDAC

²² Burrows, B., Tropp, L. R., Dehrone, T., & Cehajic-Clancy, S. (under review). How intergroup contact shapes attitudes toward interpersonal relations and construals of societal relations between ethnic groups: Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This report examines changes in social cohesion attitudes of Tech Heroes participants and compares perceptions and attitudes of programme participants with a non-representative sample of the broader Kosovo¹ population. The analysis relied on survey data that asked about interethnic levels of interaction, trust, attitudes towards coexistence (cohabitating, dwelling and getting married). From 106 programme participants that finished the programme, 44 responded both to an initial questionnaire implemented early in the programme and to a final one after the activities were completed. As for the convenience population sample, the strategy consisted in promoting an online questionnaire through Facebook Ads, which resulted in a sample of 614 responses. After a detailed description of Tech Heroes inner workings, the results section presented results across four subsections.

The first section confirmed both the problem statement of the project (tensions between ethnic groups persist) and one of the main constraints that limited the issue to be addressed (lack of interaction between ethnic groups), and that there seems to be a positive association between more interaction and more positive perception towards other groups. The second section assessed whether the selection of project participants to the project was biased towards people that are more likely to be open-minded towards social tolerance between ethnic groups. Results showed that programme participants did not greatly differ from the convenience population sample data in terms of attitudes towards other groups.

The third section evaluated subjective levels of satisfaction of participants towards the activities of the project. A great majority of respondents were very satisfied with Tech Heroes activities and would recommend them to friends.

The final section showed that participants increased their belief that society and authorities may discriminate based on ethnic belonging. They also increased their levels of trust towards other ethnic groups, and increased their beliefs that it is possible to cooperate and coexist in a multi-ethnic society. However, these results should be interpreted carefully as respondents that left the program did not participate in the endline questionnaire.

Taking stock of the results, Tech Heroes seems to have stronger effects of contact on measures that

pertain to 'relational' outcomes (like individuals' feelings of trust and willingness for future interaction with members of another group). At the same time, the programme also seems to have a more limited effect on 'societal' outcomes (like beliefs about whether members of different communities generally trust each other).²³

There is an increasingly higher policy interest in the question of how inter-group tolerance can be built. Building trust is not easy as distrust and trauma tend to be very ingrained social identities. Societies that are healing from conflict tend to feel that increased interaction can threaten identity and resources which is in contrast to the intention of cooperation and positive interaction.²⁴ Recent evidence suggests that creating sound inter-group interactions that lead to exceptionally positive experiences can augment tolerance and reduce prejudice.²⁵ In line with this literature, it seems to be the case that Tech Heroes also contributes to this more positive perception of out-groups. Only by further collecting better data, disentangling attitudes towards peers from the activities and strangers, will it be possible to reach a more certain conclusion.

Against this background, this report provided observational evidence that social cohesion programmes tailored to the youth can be correlated with positive changes in the attitudes towards other ethnic groups and promote social cohesion. The evidence presented here invites further investigation into what specific mechanisms and programmes could promote further interethnic reconciliation. As international organizations have noted,²⁶ youth are an important partner in the work towards multiethnic reconciliation and they should be at the forefront of efforts by civil society, organizations and international community to address this issue.

²³ For additional information about analytical distinction between relational individual and societal outcomes, please refer to Burrows, B., Tropp, L. R., Dehrone, T., & Cehajic-Clancy, S. (under review). How intergroup contact shapes attitudes toward interpersonal relations and construals of societal relations between ethnic groups: Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*.

²⁴ Tropp, L. (2015). Dismantling an ethos of conflict: Strategies for improving intergroup relations. In E. Halperin & K. Sharvit (Eds.), *The social psychology of intractable conflict: Celebrating the legacy of Daniel Bar-Tal*, Vol. 1, pp. 159–171. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17861-5_12.

²⁵ Mousa, S. (2020). Building social cohesion between Christians and Muslims through soccer in post-ISIS Iraq. DOI: [10.1126/science.abb3153](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abb3153).

²⁶ Folke Bernadotte Academy and United Nations Development Programme. (2019). *Social Cohesion in Kosovo: Context review and entry-points*. Available at: https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/library/democratic_governance/social-cohesion-in-kosovo-context-review-and-entry-points.html.

Recommendations for Tech Heroes programme

- » The logic of Tech Heroes that addresses the gap of lack of interaction across cultures responds to an existing challenge and further editions should continue with that logic.
- » The programme activities should continue fomenting interaction of different ethnic groups as programme participants not only reported very high levels of satisfaction with programme activities but also positive changes in terms of social cohesion, particularly trust, sharing public and private spaces, and the belief that it is possible to coexist as a single nation.
- » Programme operations may consider providing flexible arrangements for participants that could not complete the programme due to commitments with school.
- » Similarly, mechanisms that provide special assistance to participants with a non-majority background or K-Serbians that tended to leave the programme in higher rates than K-Albanians could be implemented in future editions of the programme.

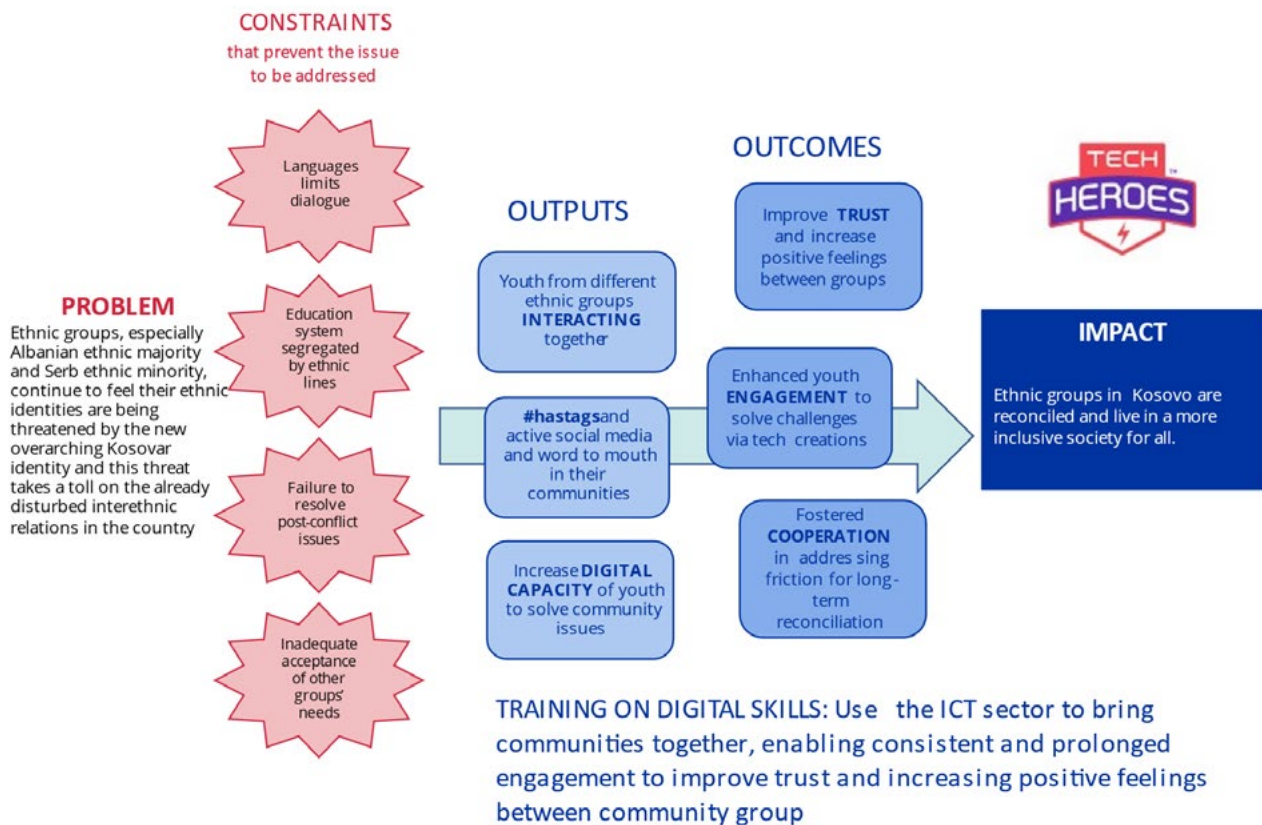
Recommendations for future data collection

- » Additional efforts can be made to produce more solid data that allows a more robust analysis. Specific actions to move towards this goal include:
- » Implement mechanisms that facilitate identification of respondents, like using an email address, to increase the probability to identify them across rounds. The mechanism must guarantee effective data protection and identity of respondents.
- » The team could create incentives to increase response rates, such as giving participation diplomas only to those participants that complete entry and exit questionnaires, or discounts in other programmes offered by JCodors. The previous incentive can tackle the low response rate from the group of non-participants that could act as a “control group.”
- » The application form could include the questionnaire with all the relevant social cohesion questions. This would greatly facilitate data collection efforts.
- » Collect data on participants that left the programme and did not complete the activities. It could be interesting to see how the attitudes of those who did not complete the programme may have developed.
- » Include additional questions to assess the experience of participants in terms of having experienced conflict with other participants and how they dealt with it, levels of communication with members of other ethnic groups and possible language barriers.

Limitations of this report

- » The limits of analysis are mostly constrained by lack of data or its nature. More precisely:
- » About 55 per cent of the 176 initial participants left the programme and no data is recorded about why they left. Thus, the interpretation of results in this report should be done cautiously because it might be the case that the ones that left the programme are the ones that did not improve their intergroup tolerance or did not have positive perceptions of the programme.
- » Most of the net sample of Tech Heroes participants are K-Albanians, which limits the extent to which the results could be extrapolated to other ethnic groups.
- » Data collected in the Facebook group cannot be extrapolated to claim representativeness of the population as a whole.

7 ANNEX 1: THEORY OF CHANGE



8 ANNEX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE CONTENT

Demographic characteristics	Sex, age, level of education, municipality of residence, fluency in spoken languages in Kosovo, ¹ perceptions towards having enough income at the household level, ethnicity.
General satisfaction of Tech Heroes participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you recommend this event to your friend? • Do you think Tech Heroes increases trust among different ethnic communities? • What was your overall experience during the activity?
Degree of social interaction between ethnic groups	<p>How often do you experience the following currently?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialize with other ethnic groups in informal settings • See or hear other ethnic groups in public (neighbourhood/public transportation/ state offices) • Talk to other ethnic groups in person or online
Attitudes towards other groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you marry a person from a different ethnic group? • Would you be happy to share your apartment building with person from a different ethnic group? • Do you feel nervous towards a person from a different ethnic group? • Would you like to have (more) friends from a different ethnic group? • Do you feel comfortable around a person from a different ethnic group? • Would you be happy to work or study side by side with a person from a different ethnic group? • Would you be happy to share a public space with a person from a different ethnic group? • Would the contact with a person from a different ethnic group would be friendly?
Trust between ethnic groups, perceptions towards equal treatment of ethnic groups by government and law, and reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are treated equally under the law • Mix of different ethnic groups makes the society better • It is possible to create one united nation • Ethnic groups should be allowed to maintain their culture • Ethnic communities are not discriminated • Different ethnic communities trust or like each other • All native languages should get recognition • All ethnic communities enjoy equal rights

