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# National and European skills competitions – Hungarian experience

Krajowe i europejskie konkursy umiejętności – doświadczenia węgierskie

**Keywords:** skills competitions, vocational education and training, relevant industry knowledge, skills excellence, joint initiatives.

**Abstract:** The labor market today is looking for qualified employees, and their shortage is still one of the biggest problems for employers. Skills development is an answer to the problem since well trained professionals have a greater chance of entering a successful career. The article discusses the idea of skills competitions which motivate young people to struggle for excellence in their professions. The Hungarian experience is analyzed since it was the first eastern European country to organize an international skills event, EuroSkills 2018 in Budapest. In order to choose national representatives qualifying competitions are organized. In the past, Hungarian private businesses and sponsors of various trades organized such events at different times and venues which proved to be chaotic and ineffective. However, when the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK) was delegated to all tasks and responsibilities related to Hungary's participation in EuroSkills and WorldSkills competitions, the national qualifying events started to attract increasing numbers of participants and visitors. Undoubtedly, merging single events into one large-scale national event "Szakma Sztár Fesztivál" allowed to reach a wide target group as well as provide a forum to meet with representatives of different sectors of industry; a practice worth implementing everywhere.

**Słowa kluczowe:** konkursy umiejętności, kształcenie i szkolenie zawodowe, wiedza branżowa, doskonałość, wspólne inicjatywy.

**Streszczenie:** Rynek pracy poszukuje wykwalifikowanych pracowników, a ich niedobór jest nadal jednym z największych problemów pracodawców. Rozwój umiejętności może być odpowiedzią na tę sytuację, ponieważ dobrze wyszkoleni specjaliści mają większą szansę na udaną karierę. Artykuł omawia ideę konkursów umiejętności, które motywują młodych ludzi do osiągnięcia doskonałości w swoich zawodach. Brane są pod uwagę doświadczenia węgierskie, ponieważ był to pierwszy kraj Europy Wschodniej, w którym w 2018 zorganizowano międzynarodowy konkurs umiejętności EuroSkills. Żeby pozyskać zawodników, organizowane są krajowe mistrzostwa umiejętności traktowane jako eliminacje do wydarzeń międzynarodowych. W przeszłości

węgierskie firmy prywatne i sponsorzy różnych branż organizowali lokalne konkursy umiejętności, które odbywały się w różnym czasie i w różnych miejscach, jednak procedura ta okazała się chaotyczna i nieskuteczna. Dopiero kiedy Węgierska Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa (MKIK) została delegowana do wszystkich zadań i obowiązków związanych z udziałem Węgiei w konkursach EuroSkills i WorldSkills, krajowe konkursy kwalifikacyjne zaczęły przyciągać coraz większą liczbę uczestników i obserwatorów. Niewątpliwie połączenie pojedynczych wydarzeń w jedno wydarzenie ogólnokrajowe pod nazwą „Szakma Sztár Fesztivál” pozwoliło dotrzeć do szerokiej grupy odbiorców, a także zapewnić forum spotkań pomiędzy edukacją a rynkiem pracy.

## Introduction

The purpose of vocational education and training is to prepare students for specialized occupations and equip them in relevant skills and experience that employers demand today. A vocational graduate should have necessary knowledge and skills to pass vocational examination, perform his learned profession well and actively participate in the continuously changing labor market. However, the reality often proves different. The graduates are not trained enough and they lack practical skills. Young people are also not motivated to improve their skills.

In the Hungarian school system after the 8-grade primary school there are three opportunities for further education. These are the 4-grade grammar school, the vocational secondary school, and the three-grade vocational training school. The reform of the vocational education is now being prepared and the new system will enter into force in September 2020. The preparation of the reform is coordinated by the Ministry for Innovation and Technology (ITM) and to facilitate social consultation the Ministry has established two important advisory bodies. One of them is the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (MKIK) that has established and coordinates 16 Sectoral Skills Councils (ÁKT), the members of which are representatives of companies operating in a given sector. ITM has also set up the Vocational Training Innovation Council (SZIT) whose members include representatives of employers and workers' associations as well as representatives of some multinational companies and various institutions connected with vocational training.

Under the expected reform the overall structure of vocational education and training will change completely. In the first year, trainees will take part in a general basic training for a given sector and they will take an exam at the end of the year. They will then choose a profession and enter into a special employment contract with a company; a contract considered an employment relationship. Students will spend more time on internships at the entrepreneurs' than at school and they will receive high scholarships too.

In the face of the reform, institutions related to VET education have to develop schemes of mutual cooperation because joint actions of education representatives, employers and social environment partners lie in the interest of

high quality vocational education and training. One of the key values that can be obtained through that cooperation is the adaptation of the content of education to the needs of employers. It could be assumed that employees are the assets of a business. Investment in vocational training is a solution to an acute shortage of qualified and trained professionals and it can improve any business. In-company vocational training is the best way to prevent shortage of qualified staff in the future. Undoubtedly, vocational education and training provides employees relevant industry knowledge and expertise. Nevertheless, the core curricula for technical professions should be first modernized to meet the market needs, and VET schools should obtain access to modern technologies and industry solutions. On the one hand, the competitiveness of a business would rise because employers would not have to worry about finding well-trained and qualified people. On the other hand, candidates with core skills and proper practical exposure have more chances of getting hired as compared to those who lack experience and skills. It seems it is a win win situation and there is no doubt that the cooperation between education and industry is beneficial to both parties, however, it is still facing major obstacles.

### **WorldSkills & EuroSkills**

One of the forms of cooperation between the educational sector and employers are skills competitions for VET trainees. WorldSkills International and WorldSkills Europe are non-profit organizations that promote excellence in the field of skills and competence development. The organizations raise awareness of the importance of high quality vocational education and training around the world and in Europe. Their main aim is to inspire young people to turn their passions into a profession by means of the biennial Worldskills and EuroSkills events, which gather hundreds of participants and thousands of viewers making the contests a point of reference. The EuroSkills event fits in the EU policy to promote skills and raise awareness of the importance and the need for highly trained and skilled workforce in Europe. It complements the VET credit system in practical aspects of vocational training. The main motto of the international skills competition is: *"Skills are the foundation of modern life. They are the driving force behind successful careers and companies, thriving industries and economies. Skills change lives."*<sup>1</sup> The EuroSkills is the most important professional skills competition for young people in Europe. Qualification of participants for the competition is based on achievements in regional and national competitions assessing the professional skills of young people who have just entered a professional career. The competition is accompanied by various presentations, shows, exhibitions, conferences and industry seminars. It encourages young people to improve the quality of their professional skills in close cooperation with employers and promotes the latest solutions in vocational education and training. The initiative also creates a unique opportunity to exchange

<sup>1</sup> <https://worldskills europe.org/index.php/about/organisation> of 25.05.2020.

experience and good practices, promote achievements, establish contacts, and build educational and market partnerships. We read on the WorldSkills Europe website that it promotes skilled careers working with young people, educators, governments, and industries to help prepare the workforce and talent of today for the jobs of the future including all the skilled areas related to the construction world: *“Traditional plastering involves a high degree of accuracy, care and skill. Preparation for plastering work requires complex mathematical calculations. The practitioner needs to be able to read, interpret and analyze complex specifications describing the work and be able to convert these plans into reality.”*<sup>2</sup>

## **WeRskills project**

The project entitled *WeRskills – informational and consulting platform supporting the process of acquiring talents to participate in skills competitions at national and European level* is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The project is aimed primarily at supporting the promotion of vocational education and training. It seeks to motivate young people to learn a profession, inspire an excellence in skills and introduce youth to a variety of skilled careers available on the labor market through participating in national skills competitions. The project is particularly devoted to development of a common recruitment pattern for national skills competitions in the construction industry, which will not only promote the power of skills but it will also serve as means to select national champions to compete in the international EuroSkills competition - a spectacular promotion of the professions held every two years in one of the WorldSkills Europe member states. The project intends to involve guilds and businesses into the popularization of skills competitions and promote vocational, technological and service oriented education and training.

International partnership of the project seeks to develop, transfer and implement innovative practices as well as joint initiatives promoting cooperation and exchange of experience at the European level. We believe that skills competitions are instruments to innovate vocational education programs in order to meet the European needs of today.

Diverse institutions composing the partnership will enable exchange of experience and specific expertise to achieve high quality results. WeRskills project consortium was properly selected and includes 5 institutions from 3 countries: Poland, Hungary, and Cyprus. Partners have been chosen according to the project’s aims and the expertise needed. They represent different culture and traditions of vocational education, construction sector of industry as well as they assure geographical diversity of the partnership.

The results of the project are expected to contribute to the development of skills and qualifications of young people who pursue technical and technological professions

<sup>2</sup> <https://worldskillseurope.org/index.php/what-we-do/promoting-skills/construction-and-building-technology/plastering-and-drywall-systems> of 25.05.2020.

towards a skilled career and future. The results are primarily directed at institutions organizing national skills competitions, educational and training institutions, young employees and entrepreneurs in construction sector, construction industry manufacturers and employers' associations, VET students, teachers and trainers, local and central authorities responsible for vocational education and training. We planned the following results/products of the project:

- Report on good practices related to the organization of national skills competitions and qualification events for EuroSkills in Poland, Cyprus and Hungary;
- Skills tests for Plastering and Drywall Systems;
- National skills competition in construction and building technology – pilot testing activity in Poland;
- Best Practices Guide with advice on preparation of experts and competitors for international skills competitions;
- E-platform for the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices;
- Publication on good practices and outcomes of the project with recommendations for local and central authorities.

WeRskills project addresses the international question of work mobility and in the long run it may influence the mobility and competitiveness of young people on the European labor market. The project may also be a source of knowledge and good practices for countries aspiring to become WorldSkills International and WorldSkills Europe members. Finally, WeRskills project promotes the idea of Lifelong Learning on local and national levels by inspiring school-aged youth and young workers to take part in a stimulating learning experience. It also helps to develop an efficient vocational education and training sector across Europe.

### **National skills competitions in Hungary**

In Hungary two types of professional competitions exist parallel to each other. One is the competition for graduate trainees called the Trainees' National Finals and the other is the national qualifying event for international competitions the SkillsHungary National Finals called "*Szakma Sztár Fesztivál*". The Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK) is responsible for organizing both competitions, but the regional chambers also take part in the organization and implementation of regional pre-selection events that allow graduate trainees to prove themselves in national skills competitions. The professional requirements of the national skills competitions held within the framework of the "*Szakma Sztár Fesztivál*" are basically the same as the requirements of Hungarian vocational exams. The trainees' competition is actually a multi-stage vocational exam the elements of which are held at different places and times. In the first round of the competition participants take a written exam usually in January, which meets the requirements for the written exam for the vocational exam. The written exam is organized by regional chambers in different cities across the country. Assessment

is done centrally and the trainees with the best results, usually 15–20 people, are qualified for the semi-finals. The semi-finals are held in one of the regional training centers and they consist of an oral exam and one-day practical exam. Depending on the trade the 6–8 best performing trainees will be qualified for the finals.

The finals for most professions are held every year during the *“Szakma Sztár Fesztivál”* in Budapest, usually in April. During the final competition the participants have to complete a Test Project. The time limit is one and a half day. The results of the written and oral exams and the Test Project are summarized and they constitute the final result of the competition. The competition is organized and financed by the Vocational Training Directorate of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry but necessary materials and equipment are delivered by manufacturing and trading companies that sponsor a particular profession.

### **International skills competitions**

Based on the proposal of the National Vocational Training Council and the decision of the Minister of Education, Hungary has been a member of WorldSkills International since 2006 and WorldSkills Europe since 2007. Between 2006 and 2010 the National Institute for Vocational and Adult Education (NSZFH) represented Hungary as a full member of the two organizations. Pursuant to the agreement between the Hungarian Government and the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK) from 2011 the tasks related to the WorldSkills and EuroSkills competitions are performed by MKIK within the framework of the SkillsHungary program.

In 2007, Hungary participated for the first time in the WorldSkills international competition held in Shizuoka, Japan. At that time, Hungarian competitors represented only three trades on a pilot basis. In 2008, Hungary was represented at the EuroSkills competition in Rotterdam in 16 trades. Participation of the Hungarian candidates in the international skills competitions is coordinated by the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK). On the one hand, MKIK maintains contact with the organizer bodies of the international skills competitions (WorldSkills International and WorldSkills Europe). On the other hand, MKIK publishes the calls for international competitions, registers applications, coordinates, monitors and partly finances the selection of the best professionals to represent Hungary in those competitions. Moreover, MKIK is responsible for the training process of the selected competitors as well as the choice of experts and observers. It ensures travel and accommodation costs of the national team at the competition venue and delivers necessary equipment (called a toolbox).

The final selection of the competitors in all professions takes place within the framework of *“Szakma Sztár Fesztivál”* which includes two major national skills events. On the one hand, the SkillsHungary National Finals are organized during the festival. On the other hand, the Trainees’ National Finals are conducted. Winners of

both finals may be qualified to represent Hungary at the EuroSkills. It also happens that a manufacturing company chooses the best trainee in a particular profession to participate in EuroSkills. In that case he/she has to complete a demonstration task at the *“Szakma Sztár Fesztivál”* as a part of the training program.

### **The role of ÉVOSZ**

MKIK launches competitions only in those professions where there is a sponsor who is willing to organize and co-finance the selection and preparation of the EuroSkills participant. As a sponsor ÉVOSZ (National Federation of Hungarian Building Contractors) has been supporting the participation of young Hungarian construction professionals in different international skills competitions for more than two decades. In 1994, Hungarian competitors were invited to the first European Carpentry Championships in Nuremberg by the European Carpenters' Association. The European Championship is held every two years and Hungarian carpenters have participated in almost every edition since then.

Since 2008 ÉVOSZ has been coordinating selection and training of competitors in construction professions for WorldSkills and EuroSkills competitions, too. In 2008 ÉVOSZ supported the participation of a young joiner in the EuroSkills in Rotterdam, and from 2009 onwards, ÉVOSZ has supported the participation of many carpenters, bricklayers, joiners, tilers, and dry wall constructors.

With the experience gained over the years, the selection and preparation of the competitors became an increasingly serious task and therefore required more and more financial outlay from the sponsors. Therefore, over the years other professional organizations joined the sponsorship of the construction trades, and after the formation of their own teams of professional trainers, they have also taken over the sponsorship of some construction trades. Thus, the sponsorship of the joinery was taken over by H-Didakt and Festo companies in 2011 and carpentry was taken over by the Association of Roof Builders in 2017.

In 2017, the dry wall systems trade was included in the competition by SkillsHungary and the first Hungarian drywall fitter participated in the WorldSkills in Abu Dhabi. He was sponsored by ÉVOSZ.

### **VET vs WorldSkills and EuroSkills standards**

The professional requirements of national and international skills competitions differ significantly. However, the degree of divergence also varies greatly between each profession. Moreover, this discrepancy shows a significant variance even among the construction professions as well. In addition to the existing lack of theoretical knowledge of the trainees, the weakness of their practical competencies is a great problem in almost all professions. All this stems from the problem of the vocational training system. Although dual training was introduced in Hungary in 2010, the level of practical training cannot be considered sufficient. Trainees do an internship in the

workshop of the school at the beginning of their education and then in the second and third school years they work for an entrepreneur for a certain period of time.

The professional requirements of the international competitions are mainly based on the West European (German, French, Austrian) vocational training requirements which are really high. But in Hungary the requirements for vocational training of construction professionals are significantly lower. The biggest difference exists in masonry and carpentry training. However, due to a unified international nature of technology this gap is significantly smaller when it comes to drywall fitters and tilers.

Hungarian team represented 22 professions in 2019 WorldSkills competition in Kazan and some competitors achieved very good results there. However, the professional skills of the competitors vary greatly from one profession to another. Especially in the construction professions, there are very few motivated students who are willing to undertake several months of training for the international competition.

Unfortunately, there are a number of areas missing from the curriculum of Hungarian masonry and carpentry training that is among the requirements of the international competitions. Another problem is that, in addition to the lack of theoretical knowledge, trainees' practical competencies are not strong enough. Therefore the training process should put great emphasis on filling those missing competencies.

Finally, it is not an easy task to make EuroSkills and WorldSkills competitions popular among vocational students, teachers and trainers. The construction professions in particular lack trainers who would know, accept and follow the strict requirements of the international competitions in question. In addition, lack of language skills of trainers and trainees is also a significant problem.

## **Recruitment procedure**

The call for the national skills competition is announced by the Vocational Training Directorate of the Hungarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce every year. Applicants for the competition are usually nominated by the teachers and trainers who choose the best students from the graduating classes of VET centers across the country. Teachers nominate their best trainees for the competition but there are no special criteria for taking part in the pre-selection phase. The Trainees' National Finals consists of three parts, which are the pre-selection part, selection part and the final competition. The teachers and trainers support a competitor at each stage of the competition.

In case of the international skills competitions the recruitment of the competitors and the registration of the candidates is the responsibility of MKIK. The Chamber publishes separate calls for each trade on the SkillsHungary website, but also informs vocational schools and businesses that employ apprentices. Young people can apply for the competition through an online application form; its opening and



closing dates are decided upon by MKIK. MKIK also provides a template document which allows potential sponsors to engage in the competition.

One of the important conditions for the applicant is the age limit. The applicant must be over 18 at the time of the competition and his / her age must not be higher than specified in the call for the given international competition.

In addition, he/she agrees:

- to participate in the selection competition,
- to participate in a training course of about six months led by sponsors and the experts, in a training place provided by them,
- to participate in the international competition,
- and that his/her workplace ensures his/her participation in preparation phase and in the international competition.

Applicants complete the online registration form on the SkillsHungary website <https://skillshungary.hu/jelentkezés>. Completed registration forms are automatically sent to sponsors who evaluate them and chose the best candidates within maximum of 2 weeks after the registration is completed. In order to enable an effective start of Hungarian competitors in the international skills competitions, it is essential to train the Hungarian vocational teachers and trainers first. Unlike in national apprenticeship competitions, only the practical performance of participants is assessed in the international competitions. The competition tasks impose different requirements on the competitors than their everyday jobs. Tasks have to be completed quickly, precisely, accurately and aesthetically. Consequently, it requires different attitude of Hungarian VET professionals which is being altered through Erasmus+ projects and focus primarily on developing the practical competencies of those participating in skills competitions. It is considered important to start the selection and professional training of talented apprentices within the framework of various programs. To facilitate the best training possible a number of publications were prepared by ÉVOSZ. In 20013, two booklets were published to promote efficient training programs for carpentry and bricklaying trades. István Vidovszky (2015) convinces in the *Masonry tasks: looking at brick walls* that *“our goal is to encourage teachers in vocational schools to organize additional classes where students can learn skills beyond the curriculum. The aim of the classes is to acquire accuracy, work organization, and complex technical information.”*<sup>3</sup> The publication includes practical assignments for students with outstanding talent, good dexterity and appropriate professional interest, constructed on the basis of the preparation process for Euroskills and Worldskills competitions.

In recent years, the author has participated as an expert and member of the jury for carpentry and masonry trades in international skills competitions and his experience is valuable for the Hungarian national team when it comes to planning the training programs for young professionals.

<sup>3</sup> I. Vidovszky, *Masonry tasks: looking at brick wall*, 2nd revised edition, Construction Sectoral Dialogue Committee, Budapest 2015, p.6.

## Support for competitors

MKIK provides financial support to competitors and to their trainers for the period of the intensive training program (maximum of 120 days) in accordance with the provisions of the sponsorship agreement. In this regard MKIK concludes a separate agreements with the competitors and the trainers. The scholarship is paid in instalments, usually on a monthly basis. The sponsor and the trainer must declare in writing that the professional preparation has been carried out according to the schedule at the appointed time. In the application submitted to the Chamber, the implementation and schedule of the professional training is formulated by the sponsor which:

- prepares the cost plan and schedule of the competitor's preparation;
- makes a recommendation for the trainers, which are approved by MKIK;
- during the intensive preparation phase keeps the Work Diary using a template provided by MKIK;
- provides the venue for the training as well as materials, tools, machines, and equipment that a competitor will use during the EuroSkills competition;
- provides a toolbox for the safe transportation of tools and machines to the competition site;
- provides the documents required for the shipment of the toolbox on time;
- delivers the toolbox to the central warehouse designated by MKIK.

MKIK organizes national team-building meetings several times during the intensive training period in order to prepare the competitors psychologically and to increase their motivation. These programs help maintain and improve the mental and physical condition of competitors and their trainers based on the methods used by athletes. For this task MKIK concludes an agreement with psychologists and coaches, to help the Hungarian team during the intensive preparation period and then during the EuroSkills competition.

## Experts and judges

The Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry delegates judges for the national skills competition. A jury is completed for each trade separately and jury members get payment from the Chamber. When it comes to the EuroSkills competition experts and judges are nominated by the sponsors. Based on their recommendation, the Chamber contracts them and pays for their work. Expectations regarding the jury members are defined by the agreement concluded between the Chamber and the sponsor and these are as follows:

- detailed professional CV;
- at least 5 years of professional experience (at least 2 years in case of a former competitor);
- knowledge of English at least B1 and professional language skills,
- internships in vocational and/or adult training centres are an advantage;
- a written declaration from an employer authorizing an expert to take part in the preparatory activities for the competition as well as in the international competition;

- participation in the preparatory meetings and workshops organized by MKIK;
- is responsible for the professional training of a competitor, which responsibility includes the development of the content of the training, scheduling the preparation as well as compiling a list of tools, equipment and materials required for the competition;
- actively participates in the expert forum,
- passes WorldSkills International's competition rules test by the deadline,
- confirms the completion of competitor's intensive preparation program with a certificate and sends it to MKIK on a monthly basis;
- keeps the Work Diary (based on the template prepared by MKIK) during the intensive preparation phase and sends it to MKIK after the completion of the intensive preparation;
- represents Hungary as an expert in international competitions;
- assesses Test Projects as a jury member.

Guidance and preparatory workshops are organized for the experts by MKIK. Experts have to take part in the team-building workshops together with the competitors. The experts constitute the jury of the international competition, which is a team of valued professionals from WorldSkills member states. The jury is led by the Skill Management Team, including the Chief Expert, the Deputy Chief Expert, and the Jury President. The Jury President has typically no expertise in the trade he is assigned to, consequently he is not involved in the evaluation, but he is responsible for ensuring the proper competition process.

## Tasks

EuroSkills competition is based on tasks called Test Projects that stem from the regulation of the skill called the Technical Description. It has to be modified at each competition by 30% and has to be analyzed and double-checked by the group of experts. Test Projects are very demanding competition tasks but feasible to perform within the timeframe (18 or 22hours) of the competition. They usually consist of two or three modules. The modules are independent parts of the Test Project, or parts that can be independently assessed.

When it comes to the national qualifying rounds, the tasks are designed by members of professional preparation teams. As the standard of Hungarian vocational training is lower than the requirements of the international competitions, the level of difficulty of the competition tasks must be adapted to the skills of the participants. Consequently, a lot effort has to be put in the training of the national team to let the competitors meet international standards. Test Projects used during the international competitions are either designed by the experts or created by an independent organization/office which signs a contract with the organizers (WorldSkills International or WorldSkills Europe).

The development of the competition tasks have to follow the WorldSkills competition guidelines/standards. The requirements of Test Projects are determined by a skill-specific technical regulation (Technical Outline – earlier – Technical Description) of

each skill. This documentation is regularly updated after each competition. Typically regulated aspects include the required time, the number of modules, evaluation methods, maximum quantity and sort of the materials that can be used, tools and equipment that is necessary, physical dimensions of the stands and the venue. The content of the documentation includes:

- WorldSkills Europe standards specification;
- assessment strategy and specification;
- marking scheme;
- test projects;
- skill management and communication;
- skill-specific safety requirements;
- materials and equipment;
- visitor and media engagement;
- sustainability.

### Assessment procedures

The Competition Development Committee (CDC) establishes the principles and techniques to which assessment at the EuroSkills competition must conform.

The evaluation system in question is based on expert assessment practice. This system is continuously controlled and regularly updated after each competition. It introduces three basic components:

- **Competition Information System (CIS)** is the IT system of the competition, in which the results of the assessments have to be uploaded. This system calculates the final results and makes a comparison between the skills at the end of the competition that enables the announcement of the global awards of the competition (Best of the Nation, Best of the Europe/World).
- **Test Project (TP)** is the skill-specific task that has to be fulfilled by the competitors. The character and form of TPs is different in each skill. In some cases, it is an object; in others, it is a process or a performance.
- **Marking Scheme** is the evaluation documentation. It is based on a TP, it includes all assessment criteria according to the standardized forms of the WorldSkills, set to the CIS and must ensure the fairness, transparency, and the high professional competition quality.

WorldSkills International established an easily followed system for evaluation that distinguishes a three-level system of aspects, sub-criteria, and criteria. The system of criteria is skill-specific, and the frames are set by the Technical Description of the skill, but the exact evaluation system is established by the jury before the competition and formulated as a Marking Scheme.

The Marking Scheme of different skills can assume the points in different ways; however, 100 points or 100% scheme is typical. At the end of the competition, the skilled-specific results are transformed to a common system, where the number of

the competitors and the average results of the competitions of each skill are also considered as weights to compare the results of different skills with each other, in order to be able to announce the winner of the global awards of the whole competition.

Evaluation at the competitions falls into two types: measurement (objective assessment type) and judgment (subjective assessment type). Measurement is done whenever the components of the evaluated task can be measured, like in construction trades. In this case, the responsibility of the jury is to choose the investigated aspects with proper, professional methods and conduct measurement at each competitor equally with the maximum expectable precision and accuracy. The evaluation is shared between the experts. The chief expert is responsible for appointing the marking groups. Judgment assessment is performed by the most experienced members of the jury. The exact marking and evaluation method of the judgment process is discussed by the experts (cases, points, point deductions, etc.) before the execution of the judgment; however, the evaluation itself is based on the professional judgments of the experts who are also nominated by the Chief Expert. Because the assessment procedures are complicated it is important to make sure that national experts are language proficient to cope with the marking scheme.

An example of defining the levels of performance for judgment marking:

0 point – below industry-standard or no result,

1 point – satisfies industry-standard,

2 point – partially satisfies industry-standard,

3 point – excellent or outstanding (better than industry standard requirement).

An example of assessment criteria and the number of the marks of a skill:

Criterion	Marks		
	Judgment	Measurement	Total
Criterion 1	0	30	<b>30</b>
Criterion 2	0	20	<b>20</b>
Criterion 3	0	10	<b>10</b>
Criterion 4	20	0	<b>20</b>
Criterion 5	10	10	<b>20</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

The lion share of the points are stemming from the measurement and judgment criteria; in some cases, the competitors also have to work safely and must be ready in time to get the maximum points. It means that e.g. the hazardous work – depending on the preliminary decision of the jury - can be penalized by point's deduction (in other cases time penalty is performed). It also depends on the jury whether to add extra points if the Test Project is finished on time.

## Sponsorship and financing

Under the annual agreement with the government, MKIK receives financial support to cover the costs of participating in the international competitions. To accomplish these tasks MKIK also involves sponsors to finance some part of the project. The details of this collaboration are defined in the sponsor's agreement concluded between the sponsors and the Chamber.

The Vocational Training Act 2011, states that MKIK is responsible for performing tasks related to the EuroSkills and WorldSkills international competitions. However, it is only possible when MKIK finds a sponsor organization which is willing to select and train Hungarian competitors. To this end, MKIK enters into a sponsorship agreement with organizations that undertake to sponsor different skills, and the rights and obligations of the parties are set out in that agreement.

MKIK ensures:

- the management of the SkillsHungary program and the involvement of professional sponsors in the activities of the program;
- presentation of the logo and the activity of sponsors on the SkillsHungary website,
- that the sponsors are kept informed about every information released by WorldSkills International;
- keeping direct contact with the experts appointed by the Professional Support,
- that the call for national selection competition is announced in consultation with the sponsors;
- that the SkillsHungary National Finals and Skill Demonstration in the frame of the "Szakma Sztár Fesztivál" are organized together with the finals of the Trainees' National Skill Competition (SZKTV);
- the venue of the competition and its infrastructure;
- remuneration for the author of the Test Project (1 person), the Chairman and other members of the jury (3 people);
- accommodation and meals for competitors and experts;
- psychological support and team-building workshops for competitors and experts;
- additional earnings-related allowance for competitors and experts for the period of the intensive training program (maximum 120 days);
- work clothes for competitors and experts;
- "festive" uniforms for competitors and experts for the opening and closing ceremonies;
- transport of tool boxes to the competition site;
- registration package for competitors and experts (which includes the entry-fee, accommodation, airfare, transfers, and accident and medical insurance).

The Sponsor's obligations:

- participation in the SkillsHungary meetings;
- preparation and implementation of the national pre-selection competitions according to the following schedule:
  - prepares the calls for the competition based on the template provided by MKIK;
  - agrees with MKIK on the date of opening and closing of the online registration form;
  - follows up the registration process;
  - prepares the description of the Test Projects;
  - evaluates the Test Projects in accordance with the criteria used in international competitions;
  - arranges the pre-selection competitions by the specified deadline and provides the venue and infrastructural conditions for the event (location, materials, equipment, evaluators);
  - nominates the author of the Test Project, the Chairman of the jury and two members of the jury;
- if the sponsor has already chosen a competitor, a presentation of the skill is organized within the framework of the SkillsHungary National Finals at the "Szakma Sztár Fesztivál";
- makes a proposal for the person representing Hungary in a given skill;
- undertakes to carry out the professional training according to a set schedule and to perform the following tasks:
  - prepare the cost plan and schedule of the competitor's preparation, which includes the intensive preparation phase - maximum 120 days, 8 hours a day – and presents it to MKIK;
  - make a proposal regarding the experts taking part in the preparation process and send their detailed CV to MKIK;
  - provide the venue where the training will take place as well as the list of general and special materials, tools, machines, and equipment that will be used during the international final;

Expectations from the competitor:

- professional English language skills are required;
- the competitor undertakes to train for the competition according to the training schedule prepared by the sponsor;
- the competitor's workplace ensures his/her participation in the training program for the international competition.

## Sponsors in Hungary

Sponsor organizations that support the selection and preparation of the competitors are either sectoral employer's organizations, entrepreneurs, or vocational schools. What they have in common is that those organizations

attach great importance to the development and improvement of Hungarian vocational education and training. And to this end they are able and willing to devote financial and human resources to this purpose. In some cases several organizations are involved in the sponsorship of a skill. Those sub-sponsors usually provide tools, materials, or they ensure the workshop where a trainee can prepare for the competition. In 2019, Hungarian competitors represented 22 skills in the WorldSkills competition in Kazan and thirty organizations supported their professional preparation. Among them there were 9 employer's organizations, 14 medium and multinational enterprises, 5 vocational training centers, 2 universities and one foundation.

### Promotional activities

Hungary has been participating in international skills competitions since 2007. Learning from the initial difficulties and based on the experience gained over time, the number of represented trades and competitors is higher every year. MKIK has taken a number of initiatives to make international competitions and their professional requirements widely known. Each EuroSkills and WorldSkills competition was documented on a video that presented all stages of the preparation process like selection of the competitors, training, team-building workshops, and the competition itself. It was then distributed to VET schools around the country. Moreover, a number of newspaper articles and reports have been published about the competition and several radio and TV reports have been produced with the medal-winning competitors. A good initiative to promote skills competitions is that of MKIK which cooperates with regional chambers to organize and fund the journey of about 20,000 trainees from all over the country to participate in the "Szakma Sztár Fesztival." Sponsors and schools also promote their trade and achievements of their competitors in a number of ways.

### Results

According to the *OECD Economic Surveys: Hungary 2014*, the emigration is on the increase in Hungary due to weak economic prospects at home and the gradual opening of EU labor markets to Hungarian citizens. The main destinations are Germany and Austria. The willingness to emigrate is observed especially among young high-skilled adults which prompts the fear of skill shortage as the global competition for skills intensifies. The trend is visible in different sectors of economy from healthcare to construction and it definitely signals the need to improve the socio-economic situation and business environment in Hungary. For the past decade the Hungarian economy has been rising from historically low productivity and investment levels. Many improvement schemes have been introduced following the OECD's strategic assessment and advice, among them the Magyar Programme which involved administrative simplification. Hungarians have worked to minimize high administrative burdens, regulatory instability,



and barriers to the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs.<sup>4</sup>

The first vocational training reform was introduced in 2013 with an aim to improve employment prospects of the lower skilled. Because the quality of vocational education and training (VET) enables transition from school to work, the reform aimed at bringing students' skills closer to labor market needs. Increasing practical training and involving private companies in the educational process became the goal of it. Regional Chambers of Commerce gained impact on the content of training and the apprenticeship system was gradually introduced. Altering economy and changing skills requirements force the labor market to become increasingly knowledge-based. However, the education system is relatively slow to react to this structural change and as a result many graduates are insufficiently prepared to apply knowledge in unfamiliar settings; once they enter a professional career. The major task of the vocational education is to improve learning outcomes by better aligning student qualifications with labor market needs and the key driver of acquiring competences is on-the-job training. Next vocational training reform will put those into practice and develop cooperation between education and industry. International skills competitions are a good incentive for creating joint initiatives to improve the quality of vocational education and training and to increase its attractiveness.

## Conclusions

In Budapest, at the opening ceremony of the EuroSkills Championship 2018, László Parragh, President of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that *"the past era of vocational training is now coming to an end, with the birth of a new era: the digital and modern era of vocational training, which combines the retention of traditions with a new kind of creative, knowledge-centered approach. This is known as vocational training 4.0, in which future workers are trained in the spirit of the Industry 4.0 process for companies which constitute the engine of the economy."*<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly, vocational education and training is challenged with digitalization, further automatization, globalized internetworking and the keywords of today are digital revolution, internet of things, and industry 4.0. New competencies and qualifications emerge and vocational learning needs have to be structured anew in order to maintain a competitive and innovative economy.

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