The role of skills competitions in improving the attractiveness of VET in Europe

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Skills Finland – Key activities

National Skills competitions

- **Taitaja 9** for secondary school students, 2000→
- **Taitaja**, national skills competition for students in initial VET, 1988 →
- **TaitajaPLUS**, national skills competition for VET students with disabilities and special needs , 2007 →

International Skills Competitions

- WorldSkills, 1989→
- Abilympics, 2007 →
- EuroSkills, 2008→

Training of competitors and teams to international competitions

Training of skills competition specialists

Research, development, communication

Why Skills competitions? An excellent tool to improve attractiveness and quality of VET

- Benefits to all participants, organisations and individuals
- Competitions with a difference:
  - Test and develop skills: to a highest standards
  - Excellent way of raising skill levels
- Each competition designed to test Technical skills as well as High Order 21st Century Skills
  - High standards within specific timeframe
- Enable long term activities
  - Not only a project – a marketing event – a trades show
- Enables real cooperation between the parties involved
- Practical and flexible

Benefits of Skills Competitions

- To individuals:
  - personal development: self-esteem and motivation
  - experience working under pressure - see excellence in action
  - opportunity to compare skills against peers - mirrors the competitive world of work
  - individual portfolios
  - have fun and good contacts
- To society:
  - raise the awareness of decision makers, youth, parents of skills and competences and how they benefit to the society
  - excellence sets examples to youth and working life
- To employers:
  - possibility to compare the quality of training: national and international benchmark on skill levels
  - demonstrate commitment to high standards of training and personal development
  - promote equipment and products
- To training providers:
  - network of professionals to exchange good practice and information (national/global)
  - better recruitment to training: young professionals shining examples of excellence

Goals for Skills Competitions in Finland

- Enhance the appreciation of VET and Skills
- Improve the quality of training and skill levels
- Highlight excellence in vocational skills
- Consolidate national skills competitions and their role as developing training and skills levels
- Build up new national and international skills networks
  - to learn from each other
  - to strengthen the capacity of VET providers

More attractive and high quality VET

- Strong links between VET and working-life
- Continuous development of VET system: qualifications, provisition of training, consolidation of training providers
- Increased counselling at schools and enlargened information
- VET as educational pathway to higher education
- Open educational system – second options, capacity-building at work
- Performance-based funding and quality-awards
- Lowering of the drop-out rates and increasing the attrition rates
- Development of VET for students with special needs
- Increased use of skills competitions –

  Celebrating excellence in skills

Increase of young people starting VET directly after basic education (change in age cohort 2002 - 2010)

Skills
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National and international skills competitions promoting VET in Finland, examples

- Development of vocational qualifications
- Training of competitors and trainers (ESF-funded project)
- Benchmarking of the quality of VET in WSC
- International capacity of VET teachers and students
  - European exchange periods connected to EuroSkills competition
- Counselling and guidance
  - Introducing professions, training and VET colleges to school students
  - Study paths in Taitaja

National and international skills competitions promoting VET in Finland, examples...

- Entry to the labourmarket
  - People with disabilities and special needs
  - TaitajaPLUS and International Abilympics
- Entrepreneurship

Taitaja

- Demonstration 2008-2009, official skill since 2010
- 2011 the most popular skill with 39 team of three competitors registered
- a special module of entrepreneurship to each skill

EuroSkills 2010

- Demonstration organised by Oulu Vocational College
- Competitors from Finland and Portugal

Skills competitions as a part of the European policy possibilities

Promoting Competitiveness
Broad Skills Base and Excellence in Skills

Attractiveness of VET

Entrepreneurship

Improved quality of training and skill levels

Entry to the labourmarket

Mobility

Internationalisation of SMEs

Guidance and councelling

Benchmark and improve quality

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