

Euroskills '98, Groningen, 26 October – 1 November 1998

Contribution to report for UK SKILLS by JDG Hammer

Organisation and Finance

1. The Chamber of Commerce of Groningen accepted the request of SBN to organise Euroskills some 18 months prior to October 1998. It took above 12 months to raise the necessary finance, the principal contributors being:

	NLG
Ministry of Education	500,000
Ministry of Economic Affairs	250,000
Main sponsor Forbo (Navin)	150,000
European Social Fund via the	
3 Northern Provinces	400,000
Province of Groningen	200,000
City of Groningen	100,000
Chamber(s) of Commerce	200,000
National Employment Service	<u>250,000</u>
Plus Individual sponsors e.g.	2,050,000
KLM 10,000	<u>50,000+ ?</u>
	2,100,000+ NLG
	(£70,000 approximately)

Organising committees as in brochure.

2. The event attracted some 168 sponsors many of whom contributed plant and materials in kind.

The competition

3. 140 competitors from 19 countries in 27 trades. About 81 foreign competitors and 61 Dutch included competitors from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Romania. Only 2 from France and 4 from Germany.
4. As an experiment and to reduce costs the whole competition period was compressed into 7 days with the actual competitions completed over 3 days of 8 hours, 10 hours and 6½ hours (net of 1 hour meal breaks). A number of experts thought the days were too long and too exhausting. The competitors were divided in their views.
5. A few of the projects have not been fully or correctly prepared (e.g. plumbing, IT and possibly cookery).

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Equipment, tools and materials

6. Very good in all respects. No deficiencies found. Mechatronics was more economical by providing only one example of each of the seven different workstations, with competitors rotating around each one.
7. In some cases CAD-processed isometric drawings helped the public appreciate the task.

Discipline

8. Although intended to be run on IVTO lines the preponderance of Dutch chief experts and competitors precluded enforcement of compatriot non-communication. The atmosphere, particularly in the smaller contests, was more one of trust with encouragement being given to Central and Eastern European competitors if they found it too difficult.

The neutral board

9. Liam Corcoran (Ireland), François Ortolani (Luxembourg) and Jim Hammer (UK) were asked to serve as a neutral board to resolve any problems referred to it by Johan de Haan. The Board ruled on the number of medals to be awarded where there were six or fewer competitors, and on assistance for a 16 year old competitor prohibited by his national law from working on a power brick-cutting machine. It also stimulated and undertook with NL officials individual briefing of chief experts and experts on the marking process, subsequently confirmed by memo. In practice, three medals were awarded in several contests with only four competitors and one with only three (IT) possibly because the organisers' wished to recognise particularly commendable performances.

Vocational fair

10. In parallel with the competition was a vocational fair with youngsters able to learn about beauty care, nursing, child care, administration, computing, graphic design, smithying, landscape gardening as well as trying their hands at flower arranging, glass cutting, microscopic analysis, bricklaying etc., etc.
11. About 10,000 schoolchildren visited over 3 days. In addition 4000 unemployed received travel costs and subsistence to attend.

Specific trades

12. Comments on specific trades will be contained in short reports requested from UK experts.
13. Floristry: Mr Frans Monk (business card obtained) has judged at the UK National Final in the past and is willing to come to the UK to advise our expert, and possibly assist at our national final for UK SKILLS.

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The future of Euroskills/Skills Europe

14. Germany declined to become officially involved, their Stonemasonry competitor being almost self-invited. The French, however, expressed interest in future participation. Like the UK, Switzerland did not send a 'nationally organised' team.
15. The Dutch government department required the competition to be open to those under 25 and the results of those over 22 were intended to be separately evaluated.
16. At the second Skills Europe meeting Belgium expressed interest in mounting a competition in Brussels 'the capital of Europe' in 2000, provided it could attract substantial EU funding. France reserved its position. In the longer term, Poland expressed interest. A meeting to agree the constitution and elect the Board from their members is envisaged for spring 1999.

Opening and closing ceremonies

17. Apart from the presentation of the teams the opening ceremony comprised a variety of dances by very competent local youngsters, a laser show and a world-renowned illusionist. The closing ceremony lasting just 1¼ hours repeated the laser show and lightened the medal awarding process by the introduction of an additional clowning compere.

General conclusion

18. Euroskills '98 was extremely well organised and went off harmoniously. Immense efforts have been made to present 27 trades and the ~~capacity~~ of entries in some must have disappointed the organisers. At the same time it must have been a valuable learning experience for those from the Baltic and Central European states. Whether such competitions can viably be organised every other year is for further consideration.

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