

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

### **Report by Operations Manager/Team Leader**

#### **Preparation/Team Co-ordination**

1. The system whereby UK SKILLS acted as a post box and required SCOs to finance and arrange any entries did not work satisfactorily. UK SKILLS was involved in far more of a co-ordination function than intended to ensure satisfactory arrangements were made for the team of eight competitors, seven trades and seven experts. It is suggested that either UK SKILLS or another specific organisation take on the co-ordination role to make all necessary arrangements and be the point of contact with the hosts.
2. There was no vital necessity for a technical delegate to attend the competition. However, he was able to assist and advise new experts and was employed, as arranged before the competition, as a member of the independent competition management board with the technical delegates of Ireland and Luxembourg as a senior appeals panel to which the hosts could turn for an impartial decision when necessary. Even for such a small team, a team leader/co-ordinator was necessary not purely to carry out the function of team leader for the competitors, the majority of whom had not met others before, but to tie up any loose ends for the team as a whole and to liaise with the organisers. There was also a role for the Technical Delegate and Team Leader to assist and advise the observers from the many countries competing for the first time. The team leader also gained a great deal of experience in preparing for this role at the 1998 Skill Olympics and in the preparation of competitors.

#### **Finance**

3. The responsibility for the financial support of the entry of the competitor and expert for each trade was that of the SCO and this system was the only satisfactory solution. Travel arrangements and, therefore, payment were made by the SCO. The SCO also paid the hosts direct for accommodation, food and other expenses in accordance with published fixed amounts. A small grant from the DfEE covered these expenses for the Technical Delegate and Team Leader.

#### **Overall competition arrangements**

4. The hosts had been most successful in securing sponsorship which resulted in the impression that money was no object. A lavish opening ceremony, almost up to the same standard of recent Skill Olympics, welcoming reception and other events were well organised. Sponsorship throughout the competition areas, which was interspersed with many trade and demonstration stands was very much in evidence.

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5. Stands were well laid out in a fairly compact area in one main hall with adjoining areas on different levels, the whole understood to be 10,000 square metres, including the area occupied by demonstrations and trade stands. A large marquee, containing many demonstrations, suffered irreparable storm damage on the day before the competition started. These demonstrations were quickly moved into the main halls which meant that this area was more compact than planned, not a problem.
6. There was a large number of visitors, some 14,000 of whom were schoolchildren and students by day and unemployed people in the evenings. Walkways between demonstration areas and trade and competition stands, usually 3 or 4 metres, were adequate. First aid arrangements appeared basic but luckily the UK requirement only extended to plasters for blisters and a grazed knee.
7. A simplified version for the IVTO rules, adjusted to suit the particular competition, had been circulated. These were generally adhered to, although there appeared to be no restriction on contact between competitors and compatriot experts and observers. This was an initial surprise to countries used to the IVTO rules but helped assist and encourage the countries competing for the first time. This and the general satisfaction at the way the projects had been selected helped to engender a relaxed atmosphere for experts.
8. The programme, which was concentrated into seven days, did elicit some criticism although its generally successful conclusion was a considerable achievement. The actual competition which took place over three days and went on until 9.00 pm on the first two days, meant that competitors only returned to their accommodation at about 10.30 pm. They had little time to relax which at least meant that they had less time to worry about their performance or prospects for the following day. The one competitor who had taken part in a four day Skill Olympics preferred the four-day competition on balance.
9. The level of entries for each trade was generally disappointing, the numbers being made up by extra Dutch competitors. The Dutch team was 61 strong out of some 140 competitors overall across 27 skills. Some of the major European participants at the Skill Olympics, including Austria, France and Germany and Switzerland, sent very small unofficial teams.

## Results

10. More details on results are to be found at Annex A. From the six skills entered, the UK gained two gold medals, one silver and two diplomas. This good result should be set against the fact that many countries were taking part in an international competition for the first time. However, there was no central direction on the preparation of the UK competitors and their experts only gleaned what advance information on test projects they could after being put in touch with their Dutch counterparts who were generally responsible for preparing the projects. Of the six UK experts, only two had had the experience of a Skill Olympics in this role and one other had attended the experts' development conference the week before.

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11. The gold medal awarded to the UK for Mechatronics was particularly pleasing in that one of the team of two, Andrew Marriott, had been a competitor at the 1997 Skill Olympics when the team, through no fault of their own, suffered many setbacks. Consequently, Andrew approached the competition nervously but showed his customary determination. All Mechatronics competitors were given a week's preparatory training and familiarisation by Festo which took place near Delft.

### **Administrative arrangements**

12. Experts' and officials' accommodation was ideally placed, two minutes walk from the Martinihal, the competition venue. Competitors were accommodated in 'villas' for up to six people in a holiday complex about 30 minutes from the Martinihal. This compounded the long days suffered by competitors.
13. Apart from breakfast, meals for officials, experts and competitors were provided at the Martinihal. This worked satisfactorily and food was adequate. Competitor breakfasts were basic and its availability could depend on how much time an individual had allowed or was prepared to wait. The only criticism concerned the timing of dinners during the competition at 5.00 pm which meant that competitors arrived back at the holiday complex at about 10.00 pm hungry and only able to find food by walking ten minutes to a small bar. This was not open on one occasion.
14. Our Dutch hosts had gone to a great deal of trouble to provide a well organised competition and they went out of their way to assist where problems occurred or help was required. Excursions for the officials, experts and competitors were organised on the first and last day and considerable planning went into the second occasion. The only problem of any real note was the lack of coaches to take competitors from their accommodation to the Martinihal for dinner and the closing ceremony. The one and quarter-hour delay was the fault of the coach company and fortunately was not critical.
15. The policy to allow SCOs to make their own travel arrangements made keeping track of the arrival of members of the team somewhat difficult. This was not made easier by delays caused by the weather. The different departure times not only complicated the team leaders' task of ensuring that they all caught the different coaches but also added to the organisers' elaborate transport arrangements.

### **Conclusion**

16. Euroskills '98 was well organised with good sponsorship but had a disappointing number of entries. The relaxed atmosphere helped to ensure that where competitors or experts required assistance, this was usually available.
17. The concept of a 22-24 hour competition concentrated into three days of a seven day overall programme worked but it needs refining.
18. UK competitors performed well and achieved good results. However, the number of overall entries was disappointing.

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19. Generally, everyone from the UK who participated in Euroskills '98 in whatever capacity benefited from the experience. If the UK is to take part in any future European competition, one organisation should be identified to take on the co-ordination of the team entry.

## **Annex A**

### **Euroskills '98 – UK Results**

<b>Trade</b>	<b>Competitor(s)</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Placing</b>	<b>Award</b>
Mechatronics	Andrew Marriott	533	1 <sup>st</sup> of 6	Gold
	Neil Bowen			
Information Technology	Ed Willey	533	1 <sup>st</sup> of 3	Gold
Plumbing	Daniel O'Donnell	492	2 <sup>nd</sup> of 4	Silver
Carpentry	David McConnell	480	4 <sup>th</sup> of 7	Participation
Cookery	Andrew Talbot	511	5 <sup>th</sup> of 9	Diploma
Restaurant Service	Stuart Bennett	522	4 <sup>th</sup> of 8	Diploma