



**“WE WOULDN'T
BE HERE
WITHOUT OUR
EXPERIENCE IN
COMPETITIONS”**

**MANY WAYS TO
COOPERATE.
HOW IT WORKS
IN FINLAND?**

**COMPANIES BENEFIT
FROM SKILLS
COMPETITIONS**

WHY IS PUTTING EFFORT INTO SKILLS COMPETITIONS WORTHWHILE, SEIJA RASKU?

Vocational skills competitions increase the appeal of and appreciation for vocational education. Competitions allow everyone to see the different professions vocational education and training (VET) provides qualifications for and the kind of competence and career opportunities students gain from VET. At the same time, competitions help shape vocational education and training and are a good way of highlighting needed reforms in vocational education.

Competitions cannot be based on the working life skills without cooperation with companies. Vocational education institutions should keenly listen to the needs of workplaces and build partnerships in which both parties benefit and win. Competitions can also help in developing



the competence of staff working at participating companies and help companies adopt new approaches.

Seija Rasku is the chairman of the Board at Skills Finland and Counsellor of Education at the Ministry of Education and Culture. Ms. Rasku is Finland's official delegate in WorldSkills.

SKILLS COMPETITIONS IN NUMBERS

Taitaja, Finnish national competition for VET students, **TaitajaPLUS**, national competition for VET students with special needs and **Taitaja9**, handicrafts competition for pupils in comprehensive schools.

- 450 competitors, 99,200 visitors
 - 424 partners, monetary value 2.3 million euros
- The figures are from the Taitaja2017 competition.*

WorldSkills

- 1,255 competitors from 58 countries
 - 27 Finnish competitors and 24 experts from 23 Finnish vocational colleges
 - 82 partners of the Finnish national team
 - 125,000 visitors
- The figures are from the WorldSkills Abu Dhabi 2017 competition.*

EuroSkills

- 480 competitors from 28 countries
 - 30 Finnish competitors, 26 experts from 25 Finnish vocational colleges
 - 75,000 visitors
 - 30 partners of the Finnish national team
- The figures are from the EuroSkills Gothenburg 2016 competition.*

Abilympics, a world championships in vocational skills for people with special needs.

- 650 competitors from 35 countries
 - 60,000 visitors
 - 9 Finnish competitors, 10 trainers and 5 experts from 4 Finnish vocational colleges
- The figures are from the Abilympics Bordeaux 2016 competition.*

HOW DO COMPANIES BENEFIT FROM VOCATIONAL SKILLS COMPETITIONS, KIM HOLM?

Festo Didactic has taken part in vocational skills competition activities from 1991. The company is a WorldSkills Global Industry Partner. Its Finnish subsidiary Festo Oy has participated in the Taitaja and Taitaja9 competitions from the 1990s.

“This is one way for companies to get in contact with VET in a neutral manner and have the opportunity to develop education. We are also able to test our devices on students. At the same time, competitions are an excellent recruitment channel. We have hired competitors in many countries,” says Festo Didactic’s Regional Manager for Northern Europe and Eastern Africa **Kim Holm**.

RECRUITMENT WITHOUT EXPENSES

Mr Holm feels that vocational skills competitions are an

exceptional place for companies to find employees.

“The students at competitions are their profession’s *crème de la crème*. Competitions allow employers to recruit employees without incurring recruitment expenses.”

Festo Didactic is its parent company Festo AG’s training company, and for this reason it maintains a strong connection with vocational skill competitions. During this long-term cooperation, Festo has supplied devices for competitions, guaranteed IT support for these, acted as a consultant in organising competitions, invited its own customers to the competitions, and its employees have acted as experts especially in mechatronics competitions.

Mr Holm’s own dream would be to take Skills competitions to Africa, where he works a great deal these days.

“I believe that these competitions can help raise the profile of many fields and increase the appreciation for many professions just as they have in Finland and other countries.”



THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS DURING TRAINING

We followed landscaping team's training day in Espoo Finland a month prior to the EuroSkills Gothenburg 2016 competition.

11.15 am

Jani Kinnunen, a graduate of Oulu Vocational College, and **Oscar Lepistö**, a graduate of Omnia Vocational College, start their training day together with their trainer, lecturer **Thomas Vasenius** at Omnia. The competitors use a laser to measure the level at which the stone wall should be built.

Mr Kinnunen left from his home in Oulu at 5.50 am this morning.

12.45 pm

Mr Lepistö and Mr Kinnunen have levelled out the installation sand base and have completed the stone wall's base disc. It is time for a short lunch break.

For the last month before the competition, the competitors will train 5–6 days a week; in Espoo with Mr Vasenius and in Oulu with another trainer **Ismo Lindroth**. Mr Kinnunen is Mr Lindroth's employee at his company Lapin Ympäristösuunnittelu Oy. Mr Lepistö works for Espoo-based family enterprise Lepistö & Sons. Both of their employers have granted them time off to prepare for the competition.

2.15 pm

The wall is ready and the competitors start building stone tiling from sett and small stone cubes. Rudus, an enterprise that manufactures stone-based building materials, has donated materials to the competitors, but otherwise, the competitors' expenses will be covered by their former places of study.

The objective for the competition is clear.

"Our objective is to win. There would be no sense in aiming for anything less," Mr Lepistö states.

"There would be no point in using this much time on this otherwise," Mr Kinnunen confirms.

3.30 pm

The competitors hold a short coffee break and continue building the stone tiling.

5 pm

To finish off the day, the competitors and their trainer hold a team meeting. Training will continue the following day and through the weekend. The entire group is very motivated.

"This will help develop each of our vocational skills a great deal; that also goes for us trainers," Mr Vasenius says.



WE WOULDN'T BE HERE WITHOUT OUR EXPERIENCE IN COMPETITIONS

"I would most probably not have my own company without the experience I've gained in competitions," entrepreneur **Mikko Hietala** states.

Participation in WorldSkills competition helped Mikko Hietala to get a job. In 2012, Mr Hietala purchased what is now the MBakery bakery and cafe space from a friend, who he had gotten to know at competitions.

After competing, Mr Hietala's vocational competence has grown in his role as a Taitaja expert.

While acting as an expert at Taitaja competition in Turku in 2015, Mr Hietala knew that he needed more staff to MBakery. **Emeliina Papinniemi** proved to be very skilled and seemed like a person, who would fit in with the rest of the MBakery team.

"Competitions provide the perfect opportunity to get a look at what many students are capable of. Competitions are an excellent recruitment channel," Mr Hietala states.

A PERMANENT JOB IS THE BEST PRIZE

Ms Papinniemi also received another job offer, but selected MBakery. She feels that a permanent job is an incredible award for competing.

"It is never self-evident that you will gain employment after graduation."

Ms Papinniemi also competed in Finland's national culinary team in the autumn 2016 at Culinary Olympics and won silver. At WorldSkills Abu Dhabi 2017, she won gold medal, and was Best of Nation. Mikko Hietala was one of her trainers.



Mikko Hietala

- Founder and Managing Director of bakery-cafe MBakery
- Pastry chef-confectioner and MSc in Food Technology
- WorldSkills competitor in WorldSkills Shizuoka 2007, expert in Taitaja in 2010, 2012 and 2015

Emeliina Papinniemi

- Employee responsible for the production of ice-creams and decorations at MBakery
- Pastry chef-confectioner, in apprenticeship training to gain a vocational qualification for confectioners
- Winner of the pastry chef series, Taitaja2015
- Winner of Pâtisserie and Confectionery in WorldSkills Abu Dhabi 2017.

MANY WAYS TO COOPERATE. HOW IT WORKS IN FINLAND?

Competitions offer

- A recruitment channel for companies and an opportunity for students to learn about potential employers.
- An opportunity for companies and vocational education institutions to train their own staff.
- An opportunity for companies to market their products and services.
- An opportunity for companies and vocational education institutions to gain positive visibility.
- An opportunity for companies to participate in development of vocational education and a channel for students to get the most current information on the professional world.

COOPERATION POSSIBILITIES

Custom cooperation packages have been designed for the **Taitaja event**, and companies can select from these the one that best suits them. In addition to money, other factors of value include materials, equipment, leased devices and work contributions, which are all needed at the event. For more information on cooperation see each Taitaja event's website, for example *Taitaja2017.fi*.

Open trials are organised for international competitions, and companies and vocational colleges can send their own representative to compete in these. Companies can support the national vocational skills team also by participating in a competitor's training or expert fees. In addition to money, factors that are of value in cooperation include materials, equipment, leased devices and work contributions, all of which are needed during training or competition trips. Read more about the national team at *ammattitaitomaajoukkue.fi*.

KEY WORDS TO SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION

FORWARD-LOOKING **RECRUITMENT**
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE **SUCCESS**
STAFF TRAINING **MOTIVATION** **CONTINUITY**
ABILITY TO WITHSTAND STRESS **VOCATIONAL SKILLS**
ENTHUSIASM **VISIBILITY** **FRIENDSHIP**
NETWORKING **RENEWING**
CONTACTS **BASED ON PROFESSIONAL WORLD**



Skills Finland promotes Finnish vocational excellence by:

- organising the annual, national skills competitions
- selecting, coaching and managing national teams for the WorldSkills EuroSkills and International Abilympics competitions
- developing the excellence of the skills coaching and training system
- training competition specialists and
- producing surveys, information and publications related to skills competitions

WWW.SKILLSFINLAND.FI