

THE TALENT DAILY

HUNGARIAN EU PRESIDENTIAL CONFERENCE ON TALENT SUPPORT AND FIRST EUROPEAN TALENT DAY

Budapest History Museum, Buda Royal Palace

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WELCOME TO THE 1ST EU TALENT DAY

Grassroots initiative reaches European Parliament

Rózsa Hoffmann, Hungarian State Secretary for Education, told the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament in Brussels in January that one of the priorities of the Hungarian EU Presidency is the promotion of gifted and talented education.

In one of a series of hearings on the Hungarian government's plans, Hoffmann also proposed March 25th, the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók's birthday anniversary as the official European TalentDay, in keeping with Hungarian TalentDays since 2006.

The purpose is to create a tradition of international events in Europe focusing public attention on the needs of



HUNGARIAN EU PRESIDENTIAL CONFERENCE ON TALENT SUPPORT AND FIRST EUROPEAN TALENT DAY
7-9 APRIL 2011, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

gifted and talented people and on the benefits of talent support.

Acknowledging and embracing the concept that 'the potential of talent lies in all individuals', the Hungarian government would like to be instrumental in drawing attention to talent support and talent development as a means of enhancing social mobility and cohesion and of stimu-

lating innovation and creativity as keys to Europe's emergence from the current wave of economic crises.

While the European Year of Creativity and Innovation in 2009 highlighted the importance of talent support to the EU, its long traditions in Hungary are exemplified by the 20-year National Talent Support Programme adopted by the Hungarian Parliament in

2008, securing the long-term support of talents and establishing policy guidelines and a National Talent Fund (see article on The Genius Programme, page 4).

This background inspired the organisation of the current EU Presidential Conference on Talent Support, incorporating the central events of the First European TalentDay, where the exchange of best practice and the comparison of different 'gifted education' policies of member states coincides with the objectives of the Hungarian EU Presidency.



Rózsa Hoffmann

HONOURING HUNGARY'S TALENTED CRAFTSPEOPLE

Lifetime of skill & artistry being passed to the next generation

Sports champions, Nobel-prize winning scientists, musicians and actors whose names fill concert halls and theatres – all are talents without a shadow of a doubt and we admire their achievements.

But do we ever stop to admire the flawless work of a plumber, a hairdresser or a carpenter? Yes, we should! The story of Gábor Berkes, award-winning "Star of the Profession" and young carpentry master and of his teacher-master János Dancsó, reminds us that talent is not limited to arts, sports and academic subjects. There is a much wider array of fields where talents are sought and should be nurtured for the benefit of society.

János Dancsó is not just a highly skilled craftsman and spokesperson for the carpentry profession, he is a committed practitioner and advocate of mentoring and supporting young talents starting out in the craft and a member of the Hungarian National Talent Support Council. Recently he has come to national attention as the teacher and mentor of Gábor Berkes, the gifted young carpenter who was Hungary's entrant in the 2009 WorldSkills International Competition in Calgary, Canada (see panel).

"I actually first met Gábor four years ago, at the first 'Star of the Profession' festival in Budapest, where I was a member of the judging committee," János explains. "It was when he won the national qualification competition for WorldSkills International, however, that I saw his true potential and offered to help him prepare for the competition, having trained apprentices in my carpentry workshop for over 30 years."

As a result of Gábor's excellent 8th place in the world competition the media began to take an interest in both the event – which had been pretty much unknown and unrecognized by the Hungarian public earlier – and in the successful teacher-student partnership that had developed and continued as a result of it. The story also aroused the interest of Dr Péter Csermely, President of the Hungarian National Talent Support Council (see article, p.2), who contacted János Dancsó and put him in touch with Gábor Rajnai, chief co-ordinator of Hungary's burgeoning TalentPoints. As a result of his subsequent involv-

What is WorldSkills International?

WorldSkills International is a non-profit membership association that runs an international trade and technology skills competition every two years in different locations around the world. The association is open to agencies or bodies, which have a responsibility for promoting vocational education and training in their respective countries or regions.

Its aim is to provide a unique means of exchange and comparison of world-class competency standards in the industrial trades and service sectors of the global economy.

The organisers believe that the constant growth of the Competition shows that traditional trades and technologies continue to make an essential contribution to the economic and social well-being of people everywhere.

As a free-standing, non-political organisation



WorldSkills International provides a cost effective means for international government and industry cooperation in achieving higher standards and status for vocational education and training on a worldwide basis.

For more information see: www.worldskills.org

ment in the Talent Support movement, János was also invited to join the National Talent Support Council, which he considers both a great honour and a pleasure.

Recognition motivates

"It really affected me to discover that finally there was an organisation in Hungary that truly cared about the future of our young talents. My colleagues in the trade were delighted that after 30 years of teaching not only was my work being noticed, but the results of proper craft



Gábor Berkes in the Dancsó Workshop.

training were being recognised."

The question of recognition for all manual crafts, their exacting professional requirements and their artistic as well as commercial value is a subject close to János' heart and something he speaks of with passion during any conversation on the subject. "In the long-term," he points out "it is exceptionally important for

the country that talent support becomes a recognised task, after all, the greatest strength of any country lies in people of exceptional knowledge and ability."

In Gábor's case, he says that the encouragement and support of the Talent Council gave his student the confidence and motivation to carve a successful career path after the WorldSkills competition, their backing also encouraging the young carpenter to enter the 2012 European Crafts Championship in Brussels.

Teacher, Friend, Colleague

Asked about the difference between a master-apprentice and the more usual teacher-student relationship, János lays the emphasis on the depth and seriousness of the connection. "During our preparations for the world competition," he explains "we both took each other exceptionally seriously and gave every ounce of our concentration and effort to achieving a good result. I was able to pass on all my experience, learning and professional know-how at a much higher level than usual, as well as the personal experience of being a former international champion myself." (In Moscow, in 1975).

"Every day we started precisely and always finished the day's tasks together, putting in around 12 hours practice a day. Gábor understood that gruelling practice – both physical and mental – was necessary for such a

major competition. By the end of our training we'd reached the point where he would inspect his work as strictly as I would or the competition judges."

In the manner of the apprenticeships of bygone eras Gábor actually moved in to his master's workshop for two months and talks of the unconditional support he still receives from his mentor. "My teacher helped me in everything: he gave me both good advice and practical skills and now he continues to guide me through life's pitfalls. I can always count on his help. I have a lot to be thankful for to him!" He also remembers gratefully two other carpentry masters: Csaba Babanecz, the official WorldSkills carpentry expert who he says was a support both during his preparations and the actual competition, and Zoltán Fekete, who achieved his "Master" certification in France and passed on his knowledge of trade practices outside of Hungary.

Since Calgary, János has been sought out by other teachers and colleagues to share his experiences so they can also incorporate them in their own teaching. Gábor is also, in his teacher's opinion, looked up to and respected as both a professional and a moral role model by his former schoolmates. "He is respected not just by his peers, but also even at this young age, by the rest of the profession" says János, adding in true mentor style that what he considers truly significant and what makes him particularly happy is that his student has not let it go to his head and has not become arrogant.

Spreading the word

János Dancsó's personal motivation remains chiefly to support those talented young people around him who could benefit from a guiding hand, just as he himself was helped as a child apprentice when his masters, in the Hungarian phrase, "reached under him" and valued him. He now shares his knowledge and experience with friends, colleagues, schools and non-profit groups as well as spreading the word about the growing numbers of TalentPoints around the country. All this, he hopes will enable others to shape talent support in their own communities in many different areas.

He also has concrete plans to further his mentoring work, by working with TalentPoints in setting up camps and groups where children just finishing elementary school have the chance to try their hand at manual crafts and hopefully realise the emotional fulfilment that a successful piece of craftwork can bring. In this way, János hopes that the children, their parents and teachers will be more open to valuing and recognising the culture of manual crafts as well as possibly helping to identify potential future craft talents who would benefit from mentoring.

"Just as important," János emphasises "is the training of school craft teachers to enable them to spot potential talent and let us know so that appropriate support can be provided. A little more support from the business world wouldn't go amiss either," he adds wryly "for all that we do get some assistance, there are few supporters from that field."

Crafts on an equal footing

Looking to the future and what kind of assistance would be of greatest benefit to Talent Support work in the manual crafts we come back to the issue that weighs most heavily on János Dancsó's heart and mind. "The greatest help would be if the government, the state, would finally and publicly, through the media, recognise the value and achievements of manual crafts. I think this field deserves the same kind of state recognition and awards that we currently have for the art world, after all, manual crafts can be and often are carried out at an artistic level, just without any recognition. We should dare to dream big in our profession just as much as in any



Building a grassroots talent network

TalentPoints function as nodes of the Genius Talent Support Network (see page 4); talent-supporting communities brought together by public institutions of education, the church and/or non-profit organisations. These communities join voluntarily and are responsible for the following four main tasks:

- a) talent identification,
- b) talent support,
- c) talent counselling and;
- d) cooperation in the TalentPoint network while learning the best talent supporting practices and exchanging information.

TalentPoints is supported by funding from the EU Social Fund and the Hungarian National Talent Fund.

The network is expanding continuously and the number of TalentPoints (well above 400) is increasing rapidly. The aim of network building is to include not only Hungary, but also all areas of Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine inhabited by Hungarians. The programme will reach approximately 20,000 talented young people by the autumn of 2011.

other. I truly believe that a successful model for Hungarian crafts' careers can only be achieved when they receive the proper recognition."

Master Dancsó's final thoughts are nothing if not an affirmation of his life's work and efforts as a mentor and teacher. "Gábor," he says proudly, "has taken on the mantle of both my professional and personal principles and he will be a role model in his practice of these throughout his life."

Related conference programme:
Session III: Decision makers – Science – Professional Realisation, Thursday 7th April at 15.00.



The MOL talent support programme helps 10-18 year olds who have achieved outstanding results in sports, the arts or in certain scientific fields. Almost 200 young people annually receive equipment or travel grants through the MOL New European Foundation's grant programme.



NIKOLÁSZ LIILÁS, fencing
Junior European and World Fencing Champion, the MOL talent support programme helped him travel to international competitions between 2008-2010. He is currently a member of Hungary's national adult team.



VERONIKA FÓNAGY, kayak
Junior European and World Champion, in 2009 Veronika (left) won a grant to buy her own kayak.



TÍMEA BABOS, tennis
Backed by the MOL talent support programme, her career as a junior between 2008-2010 culminated in victories in the pairs Grand Slam tournaments at Wimbledon, Roland Garros and the Australian Open.



ZSÓFIA FÖLDHÁZI, pentathlon
Junior World Champion and multiple European Champion, silver medalist at the 1st Youth Olympic, she is the future of Hungarian pentathlon.



LÁSZLÓ VÁRADI, piano
A student of the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy's Exceptional Talents' Conservatory, he received a grant in 2010 to buy his own piano.



JÚLIA GYENGE, violin
Winner of national competitions as both soloist and leader of a violin quartet in 2009 she won a grant to buy her own instrument.

ORGANISE YOUR OWN TALENTDAY!

Organising your own local or regional TalentDay can be a... Here's a quick overview of a few of the important things to know to make your TalentDay a success.

- Any community or group of interested individuals can organise a TalentDay: -your local village or town association -your local school or college -colleagues from the same workplace -trade or craftspeople from any profession -Make sure you have a basic knowledge of what Talent and Gifted means -Your participants are actually also your target audience: -the talented -their mentors -their communities -TalentDays: -should be fun, colourful and entertaining -should promote the idea that everyone has some talent -should emphasise the Mentor-Student relationship -Determine the aims of your TalentDay -you could be aiming to promote non-traditional talents -you could use it to start grant programmes -or to advertise the results of grants & competitions -Make sure your event is inclusive not exclusive -Keep your TalentDay politics and alcohol-free -Find a suitable location -Don't be shy to go out and find sponsors and donors -Get in touch with/invoke your local/regional/national Talent Support network

Remember we're all working to try and build a talent-friendly society, so DO involve your local community in your TalentDay and DO make sure your event gets as much media coverage as possible.

REACHING OUT TO ALL Networks at Heart of Hungarian Talent Support Success

Professor Peter Csermely is perhaps best-known within the Gifted and Talented Education field for his innovative application of complex networks theory to grassroots talent support initiatives, which has led him to set up a number of major talent support networks such as the Hungarian National Talent Support Council (www.talentedsegpon.hu) and the international Network of Youth Excellence (www.nyex.info), which provides research opportunities for gifted high school students.

While a professor of Biochemistry at the Semmelweis University in Budapest he is also a tireless advocate and activist for improving the quality and accessibility of talent support for all children, from all backgrounds and regions of Hungary. Equally important, in his view, is to provide the right training, motivation and network support for the teachers and mentors who are able and willing to nurture young talents.

Crucially, the mentors Professor Csermely is talking of don't just see this future image, they help the young talent see and believe in its possibility too. They encourage the youngster's development and stretch their ability by giving them new tasks that are, in the professor's words, "always just a hair's breadth more difficult than what their talent is currently capable of." Csermely also views one of the mentor's vital roles as that of a mediator between the young talent and his or her environment, because "talented children are often viewed as outsiders, as odd, even difficult or delinquent," within the everyday education system. "Creativity is often not tolerated. Yet it is the channelling of creative energy rather than its suppression, which usually leads to a solution."

TALENT AMBASSADORS TO RAISE AWARENESS

Talent Ambassadors are role models charged with raising awareness of the importance to society of supporting young talents whether in the education system or the wider community. Here we introduce three of the eight new Talent Ambassadors appointed on 26th March 2011.



While still a student at the Pécs High School for Arts, Edit was already dancing for the renowned Pécs Ballet Company. She now studies at the Hungarian Dance Academy while continuing to perform as a principal dancer with the Pécs Ballet.



Sámuel studies all types of classical graphics at the Pécs High School for Arts, but is particularly interested in typography. He is also engaged in a whole series of experimental works in calligraphy, painting and computer animation.

TALENTS

Nómi Szókó (saxophonist) Having studied music since her nursery school days, Nómi travels frequently to perform both as a soloist and with chamber groups, while still excelling in many other subjects at school. She would like to continue her studies in Vienna.



Édit Domozsil (ballet dancer) While still a student at the Pécs High School for Arts, Edit was already dancing for the renowned Pécs Ballet Company. She now studies at the Hungarian Dance Academy while continuing to perform as a principal dancer with the Pécs Ballet.



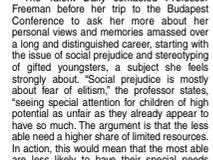
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There are so many great funding opportunities for talent support, both nationally and internationally. All it requires now is for people and organisations to be motivated and apply the ball's in your court, so to speak!

- Péter Bajor, Project Manager of the Hungarian Genius Programme

A DEDICATED LIFE: in Conversation with Gifted Lives author, Professor Joan Freeman

On Friday morning distinguished British psychologist Professor Joan Freeman will be giving a presentation at the EU Presidential Conference on a piece of research carried out in the UK, but focusing on EU member states.



Professor Freeman is well known both within and outside the Talented and Gifted Education community for her research and writing on gifted youngsters, which last year saw her publish in the book Gifted Lives the results of an unprecedented 35-year study of 20 gifted and non-gifted individuals she has followed from childhood.

The Talented Daily contacted Professor Freeman before her trip to the Budapest Conference to ask her more about her personal views and memories amassed over a long and distinguished career, starting with the issue of social prejudice and stereotyping of gifted youngsters, a subject she feels strongly about. "Social prejudice is mostly about fear of elitism," the professor states, "and that fear of elitism is a high potential as unfair as they already appear to have so much. The argument is that the less able need a higher standard of resources. In action, this would mean that the most able are less likely to have their special needs met."

"I call it my 'Sports Approach'. Essentially if the potentially gifted in any area of study in all schools were treated the way that potentially talented young footballers are treated - e.g. equipment, extra sessions, travel to matches with others etc. - there would be a surge of youngsters functioning at a much higher level, increasing the percentage working at what we currently see as gifted."

Expensive methods which she advocates also include setting up resource centres for a district, or using facilities that already exist like public libraries, which can be used as a target for time, or work experience. "To overcome barriers like lack of money means using one's own gifts and talents," she points out.

Having said that, the professor notes that over the course of her career in the field she has definitely seen a loosening up of attitudes towards the gifted. Her hope is that this will eventually allow more children to be offered opportunities that currently only a tiny percent enjoy.

Interestingly Joan Freeman did not set out to be so heavily involved with the field of child development. "When I started researching it was because it was interesting to me," she says simply. When she started out there was, in her words, "absolutely no scientific research on the development of gifts and talents in the UK. There still is extremely little, and so if anyone is looking for scientific research on the development of the gifted and talented in the UK, it has to be mine."

Her body of work was recently expanded by the publication of her groundbreaking 35-year study of gifted and talented children growing into middle-age, entitled Gifted Lives. As she has explained in the numerous interviews prompted by the book's appearance, she never set out to carry out such a long-term

piece of work, but found that having started, she couldn't stop. "Curiosity made me study them for longer. Every 10 years I'd think it was done and dusted, but because I had access to them and kept in touch with so many of them, I went from a research point of view that seemed criminal not to carry on." Even so, it is an astonishing achievement to have maintained this level of commitment over such a significant period of their lives - her own included. "I kept thinking that the research was over," she admits, "but then somehow I managed to get another grant, and went out across the country to interview them all again. I have the gift of perseverance. But I will not continue any longer."

Peer recognition is sweet Asked what she considers her greatest achievement in the field, it isn't, in fact, this career-spanning labour of love and perseverance that she refers to, but to something more elusive and intangible: her hope that she has had a positive impact on improving attitudes to the gifted and talented.

"When I started research in the early 1970s, they were seen as weird and rare. Now, because of what I have demonstrated and presented in the popular media, they are more frequently seen as normal children with special abilities. For that I was given my Lifetime Achievement Award by the British Psychological Society, of which I am very proud. For a non-conformist like me, being recognised by one's professional peers is especially sweet."

Alongside these achievements there have naturally also been some disappointments. The greatest cloud to the silver lining of peer-recognition is the professor's disappointment at not being acknowledged by government powers, not being allowed more involvement with high-level decision making in what is her specialism field. With mild irony she suggests that politicians do not always care for the advice of experts.

Pros and Cons of Networking It is that experience, which leads Professor Freeman to believe that talent support has to come from all angles. She agrees that while networking is fabulous in the educational system, sometimes sufficient support can come from just one person perhaps a parent or a teacher, who acts as a mentor. Actually, she sees both pros and cons to basing talent support on networks. "The problem with networks," she says, "is that they can become formulas which are carried out without a great deal of imaginative investment. The benefit is that people learn from each other."

For this latter reason no doubt, she is clear on the importance of talent support professionals and organisations working together at national and EU levels, calling it 'essential'. She sees the purpose of such cooperation as raising awareness of the value to society of the gifted and talented as well as enabling all children to reach their potential. This, she states,

was her prime reason for founding the European Council for High Ability (ECHA), as well as for her 2010 publication that gives an overview of what the world does for the talented and gifted. "We need to share what we know," is her simple edict, and it is why she puts as much free information as possible on her website for others to use.

Unexpectedly the world-renowned talent support expert traces one of the personal motivating factors behind her success back to a head teacher who actively did not believe in her! This person, however, had a distinct motivating (if negative) effect on her at school just before she left.

"My headteacher and I did not like each other," she remembers, "and she informed me quite brutally that I would not get anywhere because I did not apply myself to my work - which was true. But I was so shocked I was determined to prove her wrong!" Freeman adds that of course, she would not use this as a method of motivation herself, but believes it worked on her quite simply "because it was genuinely felt by the (my) motivator."

Visit Joan Freeman's website at: www.joanfreeman.com

Orthodox Motivators So did Joan Freeman herself come from a school background in which 'gifted and talented' was appreciated? Was she supported and motivated to succeed? Rather unexpectedly the world-renowned talent support expert traces one of the personal motivating factors behind her success back to a head teacher who actively did not believe in her! This person, however, had a distinct motivating (if negative) effect on her at school just before she left.

"My headteacher and I did not like each other," she remembers, "and she informed me quite brutally that I would not get anywhere because I did not apply myself to my work - which was true. But I was so shocked I was determined to prove her wrong!" Freeman adds that of course, she would not use this as a method of motivation herself, but believes it worked on her quite simply "because it was genuinely felt by the (my) motivator."

In fact, asked to think back to her childhood and remember any positive mentors or role models, Freeman claims not to have had any in the conventional sense of important people. Rather she thinks that perhaps her true role model was one of her grandmothers: a strong

intelligent but not well-educated woman who had nine children and ran a successful business. "Her example showed that even in those days a woman could (sort of) do anything," Freeman remembers. "Of course, when my own four were small," she adds, "it was really a struggle at times to keep going in the big world outside home." Fortunately, she had her grandmother's example to look up to.

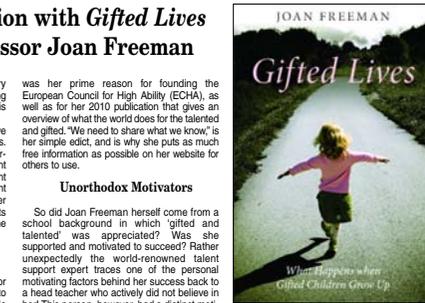
Related conference programme: Professor Freeman will present UK research carried out on Talent Support focusing on EU member states, Friday 8th April at 11.30

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OUR EUROPEAN PARTNERS. Map showing European countries with event details for Austria, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and United Kingdom.

INTRODUCING YOUNG HUNGARIAN TALENTS & SOME OF OUR LEADING TALENT SUPPORT MENTORS

Grid of portraits and bios for young talents and mentors including Nómi Szókó, Edit Domozsil, Sámuel Vidtskovich, Péter Bajor, Miklós Havass, Péter Szendrei, and László Balogh.

TALENTED PEOPLE ARE A BUSINESS PRIORITY

Corporate talent management comes into its own

Whether expanding, restructuring or looking to ride out the long-term effects of the recent economic turbulence, a business's future success is always closely bound up with the quality, loyalty and effectiveness of its people.

More than ever it is clear that companies are focussing on the importance of finding, and above all, retaining, talented people, because it is they who have the potential to make the most significant impact on the business: both positively in terms of innovation and growth, or negatively, when a talented employee decides to go elsewhere. This means of course that employers have to be alert not only to the value of talent, but also need to be clear about what attracts, motivates and keeps these employees on board.

Asking business leaders in 2009 what kept them awake at night, the research arm of global recruitment firm Hudson found that alongside the more obvious concern about optimising the size of their workforce, engaging and retaining talent were the top issues across four continents. This attitude was reflected recently in Hungary, when telecoms giant Ericsson announced in March 2011 that it would be expanding its research and development operations in the country by recruiting 150 additional highly trained engineers to join the 1,000 already working at their R&D Centre in Budapest. Ericsson Hungary had been in stiff competition with the firm's other international subsidiaries for the investment and it appears that at the end of the day it was the "human capital", as Ericsson group CEO Hans Vestberg termed it, that won the day for Hungary. He told local newspapers at the time that Ericsson looked at infrastructure, training, overall costs and human capital, when comparing various subsidiaries – which they keep in constant competition in this way, to improve their effectiveness – but it was the quality of the people that became the deciding factor.

Talent is key to renewal

This view is reflected by Sándor Csányi, Chairman and CEO of Hungary's biggest commercial bank, OTP Bank. "The key to business differentiation and the capacity for renewal lies increasingly in the quality and attitude of a company's human resources," he states, when asked about the importance of talent management and replacement in the business sector. "This is precisely why," he continues "it is particularly vital for an organisation to have a sound talent management strategy and organisational solutions in place." He recognises at the same time that organisational talent management is a complex area of issues to which it is not always possible to find simple and uniform solutions. "Matching individual and organisational needs, conscious future planning, and the provision of challenging tasks and opportunities for gaining new experiences all present exceptional challenges," Mr Csányi believes.

The right tools in the right environment

It is not always straightforward, however, either to recognise talent or to find the most effective working environment in which it will reach its full potential. Chief Executive of the Hungarian branch of Hudson, Ferenc Baracska, reflects fondly on his early career working for General Electric Hungary, where they moved new recruits round various departments until they found the best fit for their talents and motivations. It's something he feels clearly benefited the company as well as himself, but is not always appreciated by the businesses he works with today, trying to help them identify and bring out the talent potential in their workforce and make it work to everyone's advantage. Just as the accepted academic definitions of "talent" place the individual's own abilities and characteristics within the context of environmental influences such as family, teachers and peers, so in the world of talent management for business the individual's talent or competencies (defined as knowledge skill and attitude), have to be recognised, managed and developed by an organisation in a suitable working culture. Just like a young academic or creative talent, so a talented employee has to be guided and shaped to make the most of their time within a business and to give a return on the business's investment in them.

It is unsurprising then that Talent Management programmes have become so widely accepted internationally as a standard part of professional recruitment and HR services. In Hungary at the moment, however, Mr Baracska explains, it is still a little harder to convince Hungarian companies of the value of talent management tools and processes. The demand is there, but financial constraints often put businesses off. "It's a shame", he says, "they should realise how much more cost effective it is to retain good talent, than to start the whole recruitment and training process over and over." The problem of ineffective talent management in business can also apparently stem from business leaders coming from various backgrounds, each bringing different tools for managing and retaining people, which worked well somewhere previously, but may not be the best tools for the new environment and people.

The biggest setback to successful talent management, however, is clearly if the upper echelons of management are not themselves 'talent-friendly'. A good manager is crucial to developing talented people. They need to have vision, intuition and emotional intelligence, because it is the managers who form the corporate culture, which determines whether talent is nurtured or lost. Where the problem presents itself at this level, Leadership Development programmes can help through individually tailored plans to ensure top level management itself is given the right training and tools to successfully engage with their talented employees.



OTP Chairman and CEO, Sándor Csányi talks to *The Talent Daily* about the work of his foundation for talented, but disadvantaged children.

What does "Talent Support" mean to you?

The recognition, nurturing and development of talent; giving talented children all the tools they need to develop their talent. The Csányi Foundation's Path of Life Programme serves this goal by giving talented children opportunities they would not otherwise have, because of their circumstances: talent development, foreign language, IT and natural science classes, individual and group exercises, camps, excursions and trips. For us Talent Support goes beyond education and includes awareness of the children's social environment and trying to alleviate any problems arising there.

Where does your interest in Talent Support come from?

Even as a child I felt the disadvantages of growing up in a poorer family and the unfairness of people's fate being determined by their background. I saw the loss of talented people simply because they were unable to break out of the environment they were born into or were not able, for example, to pay to go to school in a

bigger town nearby. Through hard work, a lot of help and of course a little luck, I overcame the difficulties of a disadvantaged background and now I feel I have a responsibility to help others in similar situations.

Tell us your views on Corporate and Personal Social Responsibility for Talent Support.

I think that being well-known confers a certain duty on an individual to take greater responsibility for problems they see around them. I also believe that helping young talents is the best investment, that's my personal philosophy. It's actually in all our common interest, after all, a country's greatest asset is human knowledge and we shouldn't let this go to waste.

What effect do you see the economic crisis having on Talent Support?

People say that Hungarians are a talented people – just think of our scientists, sportsmen, artists, Nobel Prize-winners. For a lot of people though, their background prevents them from ever proving their talent. This is a critical problem, intensified by difficult times like these, so we should actually be paying more attention to Talent Support right now.

A changing employee culture

Today's young employees are looking for something different, something more from their working experience than previous generations. What constitutes success is also changing; words like happiness, work-life balance and the right working culture are commonplace now. It still remains important though, to have a goal and a sense of achievement. As an employee it can be hard to find the right placement, the right environment for your talent. Of the estimated 3.7 million active workforce in Hungary today, how many, muses Mr Baracska, are actually content and fulfilled in their work? Hungarian companies are changing, however. Their leadership is more open and globally-minded and everywhere you see young Hungarians coming into their own as leaders and innovators, whether in multinationals or home-grown enterprises. It is something Mr Baracska is proud of, that there was so much talent in Hungary already for the influx of foreign companies and investors of the past two decades to develop and nurture into today's Hungarian management leaders.

He sounds a word of caution though, pointing out that we should also remember that there is an older generation of still-active workers, those in their late 40s and 50s, who are finding it harder to stay mobile in the swiftly evolving marketplace for talent. Many people at that age have their own strengths and talents, but may lack the necessary new skills and communication methods, such as a facility in foreign languages, making it almost impossible for them in today's employment climate to find work that actually makes the most of their genuine talents. In other countries, he says, such older talents, even those theoretically past retirement age, are valued within the business community and become the mentors and coaches of a younger generation. This is something we already rely on in talent support for the young before they start their working life; perhaps it is time to extend this sound practice into the workplace too.

Related conference programme: Roundtable discussion on corporate social responsibility and the role of big business and businessmen in talent support, Friday 8th April at 11.30.

INTRODUCING THE HUNGARIAN GENIUS PROGRAMME

The Hungarian Genius Programme provides the theoretical and professional background to the Hungarian National Talent Programme.

The National Talent Programme:

- planned for 20 years, by decree of the Hungarian Parliament
- annual budget made up of national and European funds
- over 3,000 projects funded since 2008
- reaching out to over 60,000 young talents to date

What is the Hungarian Genius Programme?

- the flagship project of the 20-year National Programme
- a EUR 3.1 million talent support project operating between 2009-2011



PROGRAMME

- involving 210 schools and NGOs
- funded by the EU Social Funds
- organised by the National Talent Support Council (NTT)

What is it doing?

- creating a nationwide talent support network of over 400 TalentPoints
- training over 10,000 teachers to better understand key concepts and methods of talent care
- collecting best practices of talent care in Hungary and in the EU
- organising local Talent Days throughout Hungary
- publishing a book series on talent support
- drawing up the Talent Map of all Hungarian talent support initiatives

CONFERENCE PARTNERS:



THE TALENT DAILY

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