

BUDAPEST DECLARATION ON TALENT SUPPORT

Participants formulate the conclusions of the Hungarian EU Presidential Conference on Talent Support

More than 300 representatives of over 20 countries have been gathered in Buda Castle since Thursday, exchanging know-how and best practice concerning gifted and talented education, before enjoying the festivities of the First EU TalentDay on Saturday April 9th. The outcome of the conference is a document entitled Budapest Declaration on Talent Support that, coming as it does from this gathering of the preminent experts, scientists and policy makers in the field, is expected to elicit a response at the highest policy levels of the EU.

Declaration summary

The text of the Declaration was agreed by delegates at the end of Friday's conference programme. Here are some of the points to be found in the document.

- To find gifted people and develop their talents in the direct interest of any nation and of Europe as a whole. There is no age limit to discovering talents and lifelong learning is an appropriate tool to develop talented people in any age group. Talent support is the common interest, common task and common responsibility of governments, local communities, businesses and non-governmental organisations.
- Businesses with Corporate Social Responsibility Programmes, and non-governmental organisations should be encouraged to endorse talent support in order to help educators, parents, learners.
- Properly helped talents contribute to the increase of competitiveness and help the realisation of the strategic goals of the European Union. For that reason talent support should be an important contribution to the targets of the Europe 2020 strategy that puts innovation and sustainable growth into the focus.
- Talent support is becoming an important ingredient in the social-economic progress of the underprivileged including the Roma people, and can serve as the foundation for programmes enhancing social cohesion and increasing economic competitiveness.
- The participants stress the importance of the above benefits and best practices appearing in documents of the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament. The people of Europe should make joint efforts to ensure that talented people and talent support schemes receive due public attention and recognition in all EU member states
- To monitor and support that process and to coordinate joint European actions in the field the participants propose to establish a European Talent Resource and Support Centre in Budapest, Hungary.
- Finally, the participants agree to invite stakeholders from every country of the European Union to convene annually to discuss the developments and current questions in talent support. Upon the invitation of the Government of Poland the next conference will take place in Warsaw in 2012.

TALENT VITAL FOR EUROPE

TalentPoints break down barriers, unlock potential

Europe must not lose a single talent because talents are what has made Europe great, József Pálincás, president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) said in his speech opening the Hungarian Presidency's three-day conference on Talent Support on Thursday. "We have to discover every talent, even in the last school of the last village," he said.

The Ministry of National Resources, the Hungarian Genius Programme and the National Talent Programme joint conference, attended by some 300 guests from more than 20 countries, hopes to support the exchange of good practices and new forms of cooperation on a European level.

Start young

Pálincás spoke of the key role that schools must play in nurturing talent, stressing that talent support networks alone are not sufficient. "When I was a child there weren't many talent support programmes, but there were teachers who regarded it as their personal duty to nurture talent. That kind of personal involvement is still vital today," he said.

Talent defines Europe

Hungary's Minister of State for Education, Rózsa Hoffmann, said that nurturing talent can promote economic progress and more harmonic social relations. Gifted individuals have defined "Europe's destiny and culture, and all talents have enriched their own nations too," she said. The aim of talent support is two-fold: to nurture the talents of every child and to enable the talents of the exceptionally gifted to unfold, she said.

Identifying potential

Hoffmann emphasised the importance of focusing on unique talents. Teachers need to have a watchful eye for talent and give pupils tasks tailored to their individual needs on a regular basis, she said. She warned against pushing children towards uniformity, asking the audience to imagine Michelangelo being limited to carving chair legs (a reference to a well-known scene from Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*).



Participants take in a seminar at the Buda Royal Palace during the Hungarian EU Presidential Conference on Talent Support and First European TalentDay. József Pálincás, president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), told the audience that "When I was a child there weren't many talent support programmes, but there were teachers who regarded it as their personal duty to nurture talent. That kind of personal involvement is still vital today."



A host of young talents brought musical interludes to the theoretical discussions with performances throughout the conference.

TalentPoints fill the gap

Hoffmann was one of the initiators of the National Talent Programme that was passed by the Hungarian Parliament in 2008 for the next 20 years. A significant contribution to that endeavour is the EU-supported Hungarian Genius Programme, which has created a talent support network based on local initiatives and more than 450 TalentPoints. According to Hoffmann, as many as 20,000 talented children have already been identified through the scheme.

Péter Csermely, president of the Hungarian Talent Support Council, which was established in 2006, explained that the TalentPoints range from nurseries and schools to sport clubs, art circles and carpentry workshops, and can be found not only in Hungary, but also those areas of Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine with ethnic Hungarian populations. The talent-supporting communities are

founded by public education institutions, the church and civil organisations.

Competitions, demonstrations and research programmes help children to fulfil their potential under the guidance of expert teachers. The programme aims to build on Hungarian traditions of talent support, the most famous example of which is perhaps the Budapest Fasori Lutheran Secondary School founded in 1823. Its roll call of former pupils includes Edward Teller, John von Neumann, Leó Szilárd and Eugene Wigner.

Needs to be nurtured

Being talented can also be a burden and society does not always embrace talents, Hoffmann said. The Hungarian Genius Programme aims to create a talent-friendly environment for young people in which they can develop their skills. Experience has shown that talent does not always find a way out of its own accord, which is why the programme is so important, Csermely said. What he considers to be real success is when gifted people discover the joy that comes from using the talent that they have inherited.

CONFERENCE VOICES

"I love that it's not just the same people meeting in the usual environment, but a genuine opportunity to make new contacts and develop new networks."

- Mónika Réti (Budapest)
Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development

"It's always useful to hear how countries with different cultures and ways of working do things – it gives you ideas for how you could tweak your own programmes!"

- Margaret Sutherland (Glasgow)
Lecturer in Additional Support Needs, Glasgow University

"I'm just really happy to see the subject being addressed within education policy – the wonderful location also shows respect for the issue. It's a good feeling that Hungarian talent support work is being recognised."

- Mrs László Papp (Piszpökladány)
Kindergarten teacher, National Council of Kindergarten Pedagogues



2ND LIFE VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

On Friday, 25 March, an unconventional gathering took place in virtual space. Participants discussed topics related to gifted and talented education, with a global take on the issue.

The event was one of a series entitled "2nd Life", being run by the German partner of the Hungarian Genius Programme, Roya Klingner of the Begabungszentrum Bayern (Bavarian Centre for Gifted & Talented Children).

On this occasion the virtual workshop was led by EU Talent Support Conference speaker Tim Dracup

(avatar, left), an independent consultant from the UK and former Head of the Gifted and Talented Education Unit in the UK's Ministry of Education.

Those who missed out on this event will be able to catch up with the growing group of international attendees on April 23 at 9 pm CEST, when the next invited speaker is Prof. George Betts from the USA.

The virtual workshop would be a great way for conference participants to keep in touch with international colleagues and new acquaintances they meet here in Budapest.

For more on the workshops:
<http://talentday.eu/content/global-virtual-meeting-gifted-education-secondlife>.

TALENT SUPPORT HELPS EUROPEAN YOUNGSTERS BLOSSOM A WIN-WIN SITUATION

The right teachers can change a child's life: Jennifer's story

Hi, I'm Jennifer, I'm ten years old and I'd like to tell you about my music.

From the moment I was born and I suppose even before then, I've always had a special love for music. My dad listens to everything from classical to hard rock. When I was a baby, Mum used to put on a Lullaby CD for me every bedtime and we always listened to music in the car.

When I started school at age four, I had real difficulty fitting in and doing the work that was given to me. I was bored and was told off a lot for not completing the work that we were expected to do. By the time I was six, I felt that everyone was better than me. When I was seven, a music teacher came to the school. He played the trumpet and taught children to play all brass instruments. My Mum & Dad bought me a trumpet only smaller. I had loads of enthusiasm but after about a month I still couldn't make a proper sound with the trumpet and everyone else in the group was making fun of me.

I was about to give up when my Mum found me a private cornet teacher, Mr. Andrews. When I went to my first lesson, he told me to take the mouthpiece out of the cornet and he showed me how to blow through it properly. Then when I put the mouthpiece back and blew through the cornet it made an amazing sound!

Since that moment I have never looked back. I took my Grade 1 practical exam after a year, quickly followed by Grades 2&3. At 10 years old I am just about to take my Grade 5 exam. I play with the local Freckleton Youth Brass Band where we play great music like the Theme to the Star Wars movies. I also play with the Lancashire Music Service wind band.

In the Autumn of 2009 I started having lessons on the piano and bassoon. I took my first piano exam in 2010 and was awarded a distinction. In January 2011 I auditioned for two local senior schools on cornet, piano and bassoon and was lucky enough to be offered places on both. I was awarded a scholarship from each of them. I never thought I'd be good enough to have a choice of schools to go to.

Mr Andrews has stood by me even though I need people to be very patient. He used to play with the brass band and has suggested that I audition for them later this year.

I don't know whether I'm going to be a professional musician but I'd like to carry on with the instruments I play already and maybe try a couple more.

It hasn't been for Mr Andrews. I would have given up long ago and would maybe not have tried the piano or bassoon.

Mr Andrews, who unlocked her talent.



Mr Andrews, who unlocked her talent.

Making a splash: Máté's story

In February 2010, 18-year-old Máté Urbán's mother contacted their local TalentPoint, the education advisory and pedagogic service Centre of Budapest's District X local council. Máté was trying to find a mentor who could help him develop his passion for photography in a professional direction. There was a retired photographer in particular, Ferenc Rédei, who Máté believed had not just the technical knowledge, but also the common interests, which could really help him improve. Fortunately, when he saw Máté's pictures Ferenc Rédei

recognised the young man's inherent talent and happily agreed to be his mentor.

Máté's love for photography was first inspired by his high school's involvement in a media festival. There he met photographer Tímea Hidrák who, seeing his first pictures guided his early efforts and remains a source of advice and inspiration to this day. "I realised," Máté says, "that through my pictures I could show people, places and things as I truly see them."

For the next two and a half years the aspiring young photographer gleaned every-

thing he could about the basics from the internet. Initially every subject was exciting to him, but eventually he came to focus on sport photography as his main passion. "As I play sports competitively myself, I know exactly the level of effort, concentration and patience it requires," he explains. "When I go to take pictures at a competition one of my aims is to show other people this incredible achievement. Another is to try and portray sports from interesting points of view."

Through this meeting, the professor found himself as the only European participant at NAGC's 1982 conference in New Orleans. There were about 1,500 enthusiastic parents, teachers, policy makers and university members. This conference and the motivated participants gave me motivational breakthrough. I was alone there from Europe, but I learned that gifted education is essential for the well-being of society.

Focusing media attention on the subject, however, proved less beneficial for the well-being of the professor's secretary, when after holding the first national conference on giftedness in Nijmegen a TV interview with the professor resulted in a flood of people – parents and teachers – calling him for help. "My secretary almost had a nervous breakdown," Professor Mórks confesses. "This tremendous amount of calls told me that there were many individuals in need, they needed help. These waves of CRYING FOR HELP were growing and growing. I was actually pushed to go down the road to gifted education."

When I started to study the literature on this topic I became more and more motivated and enthusiastic. My paper had the title *Contributions to the Study of Giftedness and Talent* and was published in a Dutch and German professional journal. In that article I made suggestions for gifted education in schools, but at that time nobody seemed to be interested in the topic. But 17 years later I was invited – because of that article – to Hamburg, where the first continental Europe conference on giftedness was taking place! A year later I was invited to Berlin to an international conference on giftedness, where Erika Landau was also present and John Feldhusen who was at that time President of the National Association for Gifted Children in North America (NAGC).

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Mr Andrews, who unlocked her talent.

1ST FRENCH TALENTPOINT À LA KURTÁG

György Kurtág jnr. is widely known as a composer, teacher and researcher into the use of cutting-edge technologies to develop educational and therapeutic approaches in the field of communication theory and musicology. He is now officially also the instigator of the first TalentPoint to be established in France, located in his hometown of Bordeaux. During his recent visit to The Hungarian Genius Programme's Budapest offices to finalise the partnership, he talked to *The Talent Daily* about his plans, his "multicompetency" approach to talent support and why using the right vocabulary is imperative when speaking about talented and gifted education in France.

Extracurricular talent support

"I am interested in working with young talents disadvantaged by the way that the existing education system in France is simply too inflexible," he explains. "The priority will be to start identifying and removing the obstacles facing these kids in a way that enables their talent to be developed." Although it seems hard to conceive of an education system that institutionally excludes the possibility of encouraging or even acknowledging talented children, Kurtág is sadly insistent. "It's just how it is. At the moment, talent development is only possible as an extracurricular activity, not within schools."

He gives as an example of the sort of extra-curricular pedagogic activity he has long been involved in, the annual 'Soundweek' he runs with Bordeaux University and the Museum of Science. "We conduct workshops with schools and nurseries and hold a 'musical tour' to give the children a very intense experience, a way of discovering music. It's a much more spontaneous musical training than say regular weekly classes, very intense at the start, but then followed up by just one or two meetings over the rest of the year and then three 45 minute preparatory sessions for a concert performance. It's not at all like practising for a school concert!"

Asked why there is such a rigid avoidance of addressing talent and the needs of talented children in schools, he raises an issue familiar to professionals in the field of talent support in many European countries. "It's a social problem caused by the fear of elitism", he explains. "People don't want to talk about 'talented' and 'gifted' children. Even if you're talking to someone from the Ministry for Culture and Education it's really hard to get them to appreciate its importance."

This again seems at odds with the France that has such an eminent history of scientific and artistic achievement; is it really possible that people no longer value the talented, the exceptional? According to Kurtág it's more a question of talent in its own right no longer being enough. "It's no longer enough to achieve, to produce something beautiful or meaningful. If you look good in the media, you are given recognition", he says. "You



France joins the Genius European Network Partnership as Hungarian-French Composer György Kurtág jnr. plans new TalentPoint in Bordeaux

need to have a combination of talent and celebrity." To illustrate his point, he recounts the fate of a prize-winning film about Algerian-French rock musician, *Aïme*, made by his brother. "This guy is not unknown, his grandmother is a famous writer, he's a well-known singer, the film won prizes, but they wouldn't broadcast it on TV because, they said, 'he isn't famous enough'."

Discovering TalentPoints

When asked how he first became aware of the European talent support movement, Kurtág mentions his involvement in the musical part of a 3-year EU project looking at creative processes (CreaPro) and how this led to him attending ECHA's (the European Council for High Ability) 2008 conference where a colleague was speaking about creativity and assessment issues. "Then in November 2010 I met Péter Csérmelyi at the Hungarian talent support conference and I heard about the TalentPoint network and how it all functions."

One of the driving forces of the Hungarian talent support movement, Péter Csérmelyi, also happens to be the creator and instigator of the highly successful network model for talent support that underpins the founding years of Hungary's National Talent Programme. TalentPoints are in effect talent-supporting communities that identify, support and counsel young talents, while

co-operating with other TalentPoints to form a network for the exchange of ideas, information and best practice.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that György Kurtág was inspired to see possibilities in the concept for new ways of tackling some of the problems he has encountered in trying to help develop talent. "There is definitely a demand for TalentPoints in France," he says. The key to making the idea work in practice is, he believes "gathering together those people who are able to work together in more complex ways to pass on their knowledge."

Multicompetency not numbers

Fortunately, he adds, he has succeeded in bringing together a group of four committed volunteers who between them have a lot of first rate professional experience in diagnosing just where a child's talents are able to spontaneously develop and where they are being obstructed and need help and support. "Our competency in diagnosis is very strong. One of my leading colleagues in this endeavour is a specialist in a range of issues including unidentified adult talent, dyslexia and graphology for instance. I represent the music-science connection, and so on."

The complementarities between different specialist areas, particularly educational and psychological, are

clearly important to Kurtág, who explains that he believes in multicompetency within a small, effective group, rather than an expanding number of people to cover the many and varied fields of interest. "That's why I look for people with a wider range of competencies, with broader limits if you like," he says. "Seven should be the maximum number in our group I think. If we ever grow beyond seven members we would simply form a new group."

Next steps

Following formal establishment, the next step for the new French TalentPoint will be the organisational and networking processes. In keeping with his views on small, multicompetent groups, Kurtág is hoping to find a funding structure that is "flexible and effective, to support a nomadic centre with a minimum of decentralised administration." He is adamant in wanting to achieve a balance between what he terms "the creators and the executors" in this new talent support venture. "We need a good internal network to help us with this."

He already has the support of a non-conventional partner, the Museum of Science in Bordeaux with whom he collaborates on Soundweek. The beauty of the museum, he enthuses is that it boasts an audience of tens of thousands and holds weekly workshops, which equates to a large audience and regular programmes: an ideal scenario for communicating and disseminating the aims and activities of the new TalentPoint.

The right vocabulary

The question remains though that if there is such stigma attached to focussing on gifted or talented children, how exactly does Kurtág intend to spread the word about the support being offered by the Bordeaux TalentPoint to such children? It's just a question of terminology, the canny musical pioneer divulges. "We talk about 'talent protection' rather than talent support and about a child's 'openness and curiosity' rather than their 'talent'." György Kurtág clearly has a descriptive and creative way with words as well as with musical notes. What words can he find then, to describe and encompass his own multi-talented, multifaceted interests and passions?

"As a researcher, my interest lies in the design of intelligent instruments and the creation of mechanisms that integrate collective instruments and interactive pedagogy (man-machine communication). As a composer I'm interested in composing with other musicians and in projects created organically with performers. And as a teacher I've created a methodology that helps to develop the skills necessary for continuous 3-D communication: sensory intelligence, shared intelligence and collective intelligence – the ability to interpret intent, to orient oneself in time and in form, and the identification and evaluation of musical situations."

HUNGARY'S SPAGHETTI BRIDGE FANS

Students combine technical know-how and design finesse to consistently shine in one of the most unusual global school competitions

Spaghetti carbonara, spaghetti bolognese, spaghetti vongole – all familiar fare to pasta lovers round the world. But have you ever considered taking your box of spaghetti and building a feat of architectural engineering with it? That's precisely what hundreds of high school and university students do every year in what has become one of the great global 'educational' competitions attracting both competitors and spectators to the many national and international contests, usually held in schools or colleges.

While it may sound – and even look – like a slightly 'out there' pastime, little more than a bit of light-hearted fun, in reality these competitions require feats of high level engineering and design talent as well as months, sometimes a whole year of intense preparation and dedication. So what's it all about?

Exactly what it sounds like

A spaghetti bridge is pretty much what it sounds like: a small scale model bridge made of spaghetti or other hard, dry noodles, affixed with nothing more than heated commercial glue. The pasta itself may be shaped, molded or boiled in water, but no additives are allowed to strengthen it.

The concept arose from simple expedi-

ency: architectural and engineering students constructed bridges as simple, cost-effective educational experiments, the aim usually being to build a bridge able to sustain a load with a specific quantity of materials over a specific span. When the spaghetti bridge-building craze took off and turned competitive, it was usually the bridge that could hold the greatest load for a short period of time that would win.

Today, strict competition rules govern not only the type of pasta and glue to be used, but the exact dimensions including depth, span, mass and lowest point below the horizontal line between end supports. In so-called 'Heavyweight' contests, competitors are also expected to provide a suitable road surface – a solid, continuous pasta road deck that is at least 50 mm wide and covers the full length of the bridge (the recommended building material being lasagne in preference to tarmac).

Canadian-Hungarian connection

Canada is home to the second largest Hungarian diaspora (not traditionally counting those autochthonous to their homeland in countries neighbouring Hungary) with over 300,000 Canadians being of Hungarian ancestry. A more

unexpected bond is the mutual love of spaghetti bridge-building. The most renowned world spaghetti bridge competition – now in its 28th year – is held annually at Okanagan College in British Columbia. The competition is chiefly famous for its Heavyweight Contest, where an individual or team seek to build a bridge within the specified parameters that will hold the greatest load. When that load exceeds 400 kg on a bridge weighing less than a kilo, the reason for the excitement surrounding this event becomes a lot easier to understand. As construction of these 'heavyweights' can take over a week, they are built in competitors' home countries and shipped – carefully! – to competition locations.

The great spaghetti duo

For many years now, Hungarian students have placed in the top three or won this event. Probably the most famous of these Hungarian bridge-building teams are Norbert Pozsonyi and Aliz Tótván of the Széchenyi István University of Győr. In 2009 they brought the full capacity crowd in Okanagan College's lecture theatre to its feet when they shattered the previous Spaghetti Bridge world record by 90 kilograms, winning the \$1,500 first prize with a bridge that weighed 982 grams and held 443.58 kg.



The Hungarian duo built the bridge over the course of 10 days before carefully packing it and making the flight from Europe to compete. Tótván and Pozsonyi captured second place in the competition in 2008 and spent a considerable amount of time perfecting their building technique to ensure success at the 2009 competition.

"We built a lot of test bridges while we were at home," said Tótván. "Our last test bridge held 418 kilograms and then it broke the testing machine so we weren't sure how much our final bridge would actually hold." 2009's competition, however, marked a final chapter in their Okanagan College Spaghetti Bridge careers. After placing second in the competition in 2008 and winning in 2009, the duo spent 2010 focusing on the final year of their university studies.

The conqueror returns

Pozsonyi, however, has not altogether left his spaghetti days behind him. An alumnus of Western Transdanubia's oldest

building-trade school, the renowned József Hild Building-Trade Technical High School, Pozsonyi returned in March 2011 to judge the school's first spaghetti bridge competition in which six teams participated and the winning bridge bore a load of 230.6 kg. It is perhaps not surprising that this now-qualified, talented

civil engineer should hail from the Hild School. His alma mater has a great history of talent support as an integral part of its various vocational disciplines and of preparing its talented students for specialist competitions and student conferences. Its most exceptional students work with the National Association of Research Students and to this day, the school maintains its position at the top of the all-time national ranking in architectural competitions.

In recognition of its many years of effective and dedicated talent development, supporting and motivating scores of young talents like Norbert Pozsonyi, the Hild School was recently awarded the title of official TalentPoint by the Hungarian Talent Support Council.

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