

## EuroSkills starts its final countdown:

**Exactly 100 days from now, the future European Vocational Champions of EuroSkills 2021 will be crowned. That's why a "city" comprising tented halls and the necessary infrastructure will soon spring up at the event venue, Schwarzl-Freizeitzentrum (SFZ). Thanks to a carefully designed scheme comprising safety and preventive measures, the event is expected to host around 10,000 visitors each day. This will make the European Skills Championships the most important lever against the shortage of skilled staff.**

STYRIA/AUSTRIA, 18 June 2021: it's all systems go at the Schwarzl-Freizeitzentrum leisure and activity centre. A very short time from now, a city consisting of twelve tented halls covering a total area of over 25,000 square metres will have been set up. And that's in addition to the 10,000-square-metre Davis Cup stadium already at the site. The tented halls will come to life again starting on 22 September, when around 450 young skilled workers from many countries compete to become European Champion in one of 48 skills and trades. "Over the last few years, and especially in recent months, we and our partners have been doing all we can and have worked tirelessly to organise EuroSkills for the first time in Austria. We did not give up – quite the contrary. We are hugely delighted that EuroSkills 2021 is able to take place in 100 days' time," says Josef Herk, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of EuroSkills 2020 GmbH and President of the Styrian Economic Chamber. Mr Herk underlines the purpose of the event: "High-quality training and our young professionals are the future of our countries, the future of Europe. Especially now, we need to send out a strong signal to young Europeans. We will find ourselves facing enormous challenges in the coming years, which we will not be able to overcome without the young generation and young professionals in Europe".

### **A carefully designed safety scheme**

About 10,000 visitors are expected to attend the European Skills Championships on each day of the event. This will be possible thanks to a detailed and carefully designed scheme comprising safety and preventive measures, which was developed by the Organising Committee. Over an area of open space totalling 70,000 square metres, it will be possible to receive 3,500 visitors in each of three time slots (in the morning, afternoon and evening). Visitors entering the competition venue will have to register in advance so that contact tracing is possible at all times. "EuroSkills is not only important in terms of raising the profile of vocational education and training – it will also provide a key stimulus to further raise the economic mood of our country. On behalf of the Federal Government of Austria, we are taking targeted action to make apprenticeships an even more attractive career option. What's more, digitisation is creating new career profiles requiring different qualifications, which is why we are working on the modernisation and restructuring of apprentice training", emphasises the Austrian Minister of Economic Affairs, Margarete Schramböck.

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### Ambassadors for the education system

The commercial world could certainly benefit from the performance of the Austrian EuroSkills team: “Our 197 competitors have won an incredible 111 medals in just the six previous EuroSkills competitions since 2008. We’ve won ‘Best of Nations’ three times and are looking forward to outstanding performances this year as well”, says the Vice-President of the Austrian Economic Chamber, Amelie Gross. Austria was also crowned the best EU nation at the last major skills event, WorldSkills in Kazan, Russia, where the national team scooped twelve medals. “Our success in skills competitions is a superb testimonial for the Austrian education system, which makes us the envy of the international community. Not enough people in Austria are aware of the fantastic career opportunities that are opened up by pursuing vocational education and further training. We want to tell people about this. EuroSkills 2021 in Graz is a great opportunity for young people to find out about vocational education, absorb the passion and enthusiasm of the best skilled professionals as they watch them at work, and gain inspiration for their own future careers,” says the Vice-President.

### Learning about careers at first hand

Barbara Eibinger-Miedl, Regional Minister for Economic Affairs, emphasises that EuroSkills will make Styria a European talent hotspot: “I am delighted that EuroSkills is being held in Styria this year, and that we can show the whole of Europe that Styria is home to great talent. The Green Heart of Austria will present itself as an excellent host and a dynamic business location. The event also offers us the opportunity to showcase the achievements of young, skilled workers to a wide audience and to highlight the enormous value of the dual education system. This is how we want to inspire young people from Styria, in particular, to consider pursuing the vocational route.”

### Top-level educational conference

The City of Graz will be responsible for the celebratory atmosphere by organising the event’s opening and closing ceremonies. And the international EuroSkills Congress on 23 September, entitled “Future of Skills”, will feature top speakers on the subject of education. “We are proud that this conference, attended by top experts in the field, is being held at Messe Congress Graz (MCG). As a centre of research and science, with six universities, we want to discuss the future of vocational education with more than 300 international experts,” says Siegfried Nagl, Mayor of the City of Graz.

### 300 semi-trailers to provide infrastructure

The final preparations for the big event are being made all over Styria, with around 300 semi-trailers delivering the necessary products, goods and machines in the coming weeks. To give some perspective: 15,000 different items and machines, from cordless screwdrivers and CNC machines to spirit levels, will be transported from the three logistics warehouses in Graz to the competition venue. “For the purposes of the competition, it is crucial for us that all competitors work under identical conditions. This means, for example, that all stonemasons have the same pressure-flow rate at all times. Or that all receptionists have the same conditions in terms of the actors they serve, or that all CNC machines are configured in the same way,” says Stefan Praschl, Vice-President of World Skills Europe and technical manager for EuroSkills 2021. “Professionalism, safety and – of course – our hospitality...we want to bring all of these to Europe.” And, he stresses, “The atmosphere among the participating countries is fantastic. The umbrella organisation World Skills Europe has a great deal of faith in Austria.

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Everyone is looking forward to EuroSkills with great confidence and joy. The return of freedom of travel will make the event easier to organise.”

### “Respect and recognition for skilled work”

For this to be possible at all, the support from sponsors is crucial: “For Energie Steiermark, the training and qualifications of its skilled workers are an important factor for the success of the company. At a cost of ten million euros, we have built Austria’s most state-of-the-art training centre in the field of renewable energy, and are training ‘green energy’ professionals there. EuroSkills 2021 will impressively showcase the outstanding achievements of young, skilled workers, to the Styrian people. We think this is important, and that’s why we, as a leading Styrian company, have come on board as a partner,” says Martin Graf, director of the management board of EuroSkills partner and Styrian energy provider Energie Steiermark. The manager of the event venue at Schwarzl-Freizeitzentrum, Klaus Leutgeb, also lends his support for the European Skills Championships: “We are, of course, very pleased to be able to stage an event in which there is such great international interest. The Schwarzl-Freizeitzentrum leisure and activity centre is certainly the ideal venue for this competition – not just because of its size, but also thanks to its excellent transport connections, with the motorway and the airport nearby. At any rate, it’s an important sign for the industry that things are moving forward and that we are slowly getting back to normal.

### “You grow with the challenges”

“Organising a major international event is always a big challenge”, stress Angelika Ledineg and Harald del Negro, managing directors of the body responsible for the event. “Since we won the bid to host EuroSkills 2020 in 2016, the team has been working tirelessly to get a first-class event up and running. Nobody could have foreseen that we would have to reschedule the event and add another year of preparation, organisation and reorganisation. Cancellation was never an option: after all, you grow with the challenge. This is what will make EuroSkills 2021 an extraordinary and unforgettable event, in terms of both preparation and implementation.”

EuroSkills President and Chairman of the Supervisory Board Josef Herk adds: “The experiences of the last few months make EuroSkills 2021 far more than a mere competition. EuroSkills is a symbol of commitment and passion, of team spirit and cooperation, of hope and confidence – and of the staying power needed to get to the top.”

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