

12-13 SEPTEMBER 2016

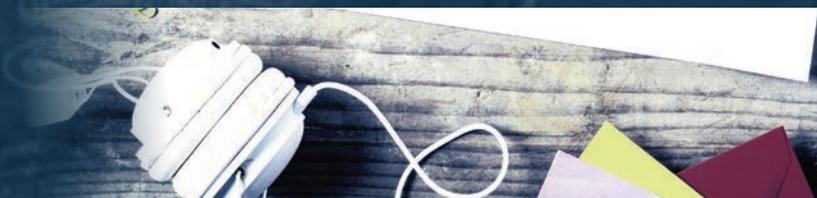
DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HOTEL
BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA



Conference

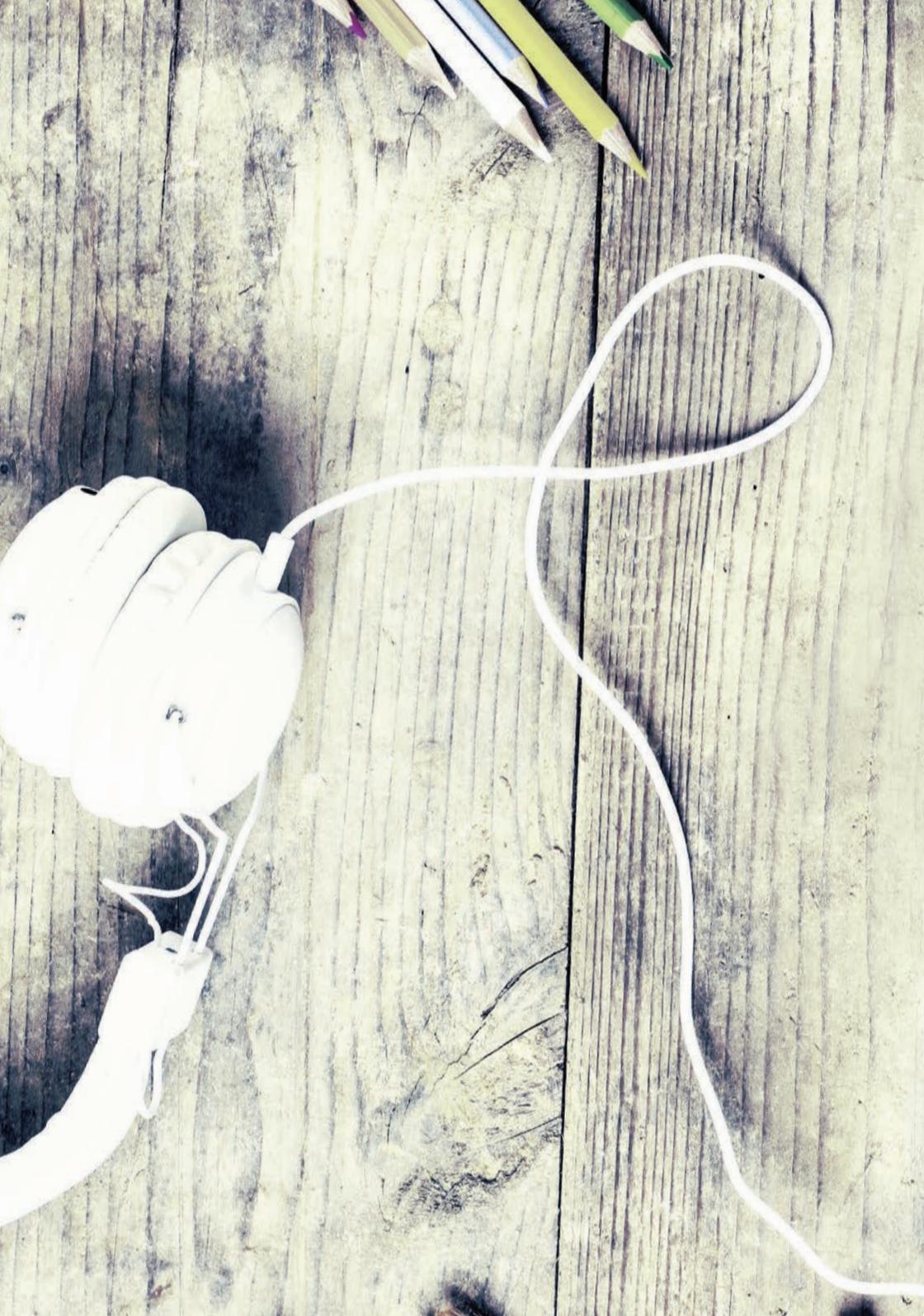
ON THE FOSTERING
AND DEVELOPMENT
OF

TALENT



CONCLUSIONS







"Every neglected, undeveloped talent is a lost opportunity for the child, a lost chance for the community, for the society, for the country and is a lost chance for our joint fantastic Europe."

Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic

"Each and every individual has a specific kind of talent, however it is necessary to reveal it and to develop and support it from the early childhood."

Peter Plavčan, Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic

"All the actors involved in formal, informal and non-formal education, including parents, have a part to play in revealing the talent of each and every child."

Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

"We need a society that is courageous enough to embrace diversity, because once you start to exclude segments of population, you are also excluding talent."

Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment of Malta

THE FOSTERING AND DEVELOPMENT OF TALENT

Talent consists of a summary of innate prerequisites or is the result of development of these prerequisites. The promotion of talent is of great importance and has huge potential for individuals as well as for the whole society and its further development. To recognize talented individuals in childhood is a difficult but important task which provides the basis for appropriate education and upbringing. In the process of education and guidance of gifted and talented individuals or groups it is appropriate to emphasize the need for individualization and increased sensibility, applying different systematic educational approaches and creating favourable conditions for their development. The fostering and development of talent leads to reshaping of the high potential into excellence. It includes many important activities, such as identification of talented individuals, offer of appropriate educational processes and activities with the objective to develop their potential onto the highest level possible, as well as development and implementation of appropriate policy initiatives. The support of talented individuals enables them to fully develop personally and subsequently also professionally. Gifted individual is able to create new and useful ideas, products and things and this to enrich the society as a whole. For these reasons, it is necessary to devote significant attention to the correct way of guidance, support and development of talent. Furthermore, it is necessary to raise awareness about the need for this activity in different areas at national and European level in order to secure competitiveness and sustainable European economy and society.

It is necessary to treat the subject of fostering and development of talent not only in terms of personal development and economical growth, but also to emphasize its important role in promoting social inclusion and preventing marginalization and intolerance. Ensuring the adequate environment in the guidance and in academic and vocational education is one of the basic requirements for development of talented individuals but also society as a whole. However, to sustain economic growth individual countries have to require significantly increased number of highly educated people. Many studies point out that in the near future there will be a lack of talented and gifted people. One of the main causes of this phenomenon is the demographic change in many countries. Therefore, the promotion of talent and excellence is essential for building competitiveness and sustainable European economy and society. As talent represents the economic and social role it has strategic importance and therefore requires specific attention and systematic approach from all stakeholders, not only at national but also at European level.

Talent should not be only sought-after but also formed. Therefore, it is necessary to develop various activities at different stages and in different areas of lives of individuals. During the Conference on the fostering and development of talent organized within the Slovak Presidency of the EU Council the following areas with the need to carry out initiatives to support and develop talent were put together:

1. Identification and development of necessary skills
2. Education as the baseline activity in the fostering and development of talent
3. Accentuating the need and importance of inclusive education and approach
4. Taking into account the specific need when working with young talents
5. Involvement of private sector in the process of fostering and development of talent

1. Identification and development of necessary skills

The current period is characterized by the need to increase overall employment and to identify ways leading to adequate employment. The European Commission in its new "Agenda for New Skills for Europe" focuses on the characteristics of future employment, which constitutes an important part of supporting employment growth. Due to the influence of various factors and changes it can be expected that the labour market will change dramatically in the upcoming years. It is necessary to prepare the society for this changing situation in order to ensure the ability of different generations to stay employable. It is necessary to incorporate the issue of skills into the education system and lifelong learning and it is important to emphasize the development of digital skills.

Employers are currently seeking individuals not only conscious of their talent but also having some of the core competencies of the 20th century, such as the ability to work in teams enabling them to improve work efficiency and staff motivation. At the same time, teamwork continues to develop the ability to communicate well and to solve problems, what might enhance interpersonal relationships and improve the atmosphere in the workplace and overall corporate culture. Workers also learn from their own experience and from the experience of other colleagues. In addition to the modernization of workplaces, work tasks and technologies, more emphasis is put on the ability of analytical, practical and creative thinking. Moreover, employers are looking for digitally literate employees who can effectively and adequately use information and communication technologies. Rapid technological development forces also the older generation to acquire digital skills and that leads to the need for reforming the system and form of lifelong learning.

The promotion and development of human capital, employment and competitiveness requires establishment of cooperation between policy makers, educational institutions and business sector, while it is necessary to focus mainly on the following skills:

- ability to work in teams,
- ability to learn from worker's own experience and from others,
- ability to solve problems,
- digital skills,
- communication skills,
- analytical skills,
- creative thinking,
- practical skills.

Therefore, in the area of skills it is now necessary to draw particular attention to transferable skills (ability to work in teams, creative thinking and problem solving) and to identify in cooperation with the private sector which skills will likely be required by labour market and society as a whole in the future.

Recommended key activities:

- to identify essential transferable skills and core competencies
- to support the development of skills at different stages of lives of individuals
- to establish cooperation between policy makers, educational institutions and the business sector to identify skills needs and occupations

2. Education as the baseline activity in the fostering and development of talent

Care for talented population should be part of the education policy of each country. Cooperation between policy makers, educational institutions and other stakeholders would enable to create a system of education that would meet and better reflect future needs of society. In education, it is first necessary to ensure uniform rights, and thus ensure access to education for everyone while stressing the need for lifelong learning and skills usable in the future. Given the aging population of Europe, it is important not to discourage talented individuals but rather to provide them with the most opportunities for their development and realization. Thanks to new and involved talents it will be possible to change the educational system and adjust it to the needs of the current era. However, these changes require time, involvement of responsible actors and last but not least financial support.

The fostering and development of talent through education should be approached gradually and diversely because different kinds of talents may start to manifest at different ages. Generally, it is necessary to start with the development of talent already in pre-school education. Investing in early childhood education and activities developed in the early age can support children's potential.

To ensure effective work with talents in the field of education it is necessary to support the work of teachers whose profession shapes the future of every country and society. Teachers themselves should have the required skills leading to support children and students to acquire new and necessary knowledge, skills and experience. They also need the ability to master digital skills and to implement new ways of learning, and the ability of incorporating education and work with talented in their institutions.

In the area of support and development of talent in education it is necessary to implement in classes and schools at all levels (pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education, vocational training, and higher education) the measures leading to the establishment of a strong support system to work with talent. Within this framework, it is appropriate, for example, to support formal education by elements of informal learning and education. Important means of ensuring these activities in the educational process is the incorporation of learning outside the traditional classroom environment and developing diverse education system that offers different paths and programs taking into account the needs of individuals. Taking into account the needs of society, it is suitable to introduce into the school system multilingual learning and implicit learning (learning without conscious effort). New opportunities are brought by the implementation of online learning which enables distance learning led by appropriate mentors. Equally important is the development of dual system of education, and thus vocational education system. It is therefore necessary to ensure cooperation of various institutions and companies leading to the organization of activities meeting these requirements.

Within education linked to the fostering and development of talent it is also necessary to develop the field of research and development. It is suitable to encourage talented individuals using inspirational practices and people from this field, and explain to them that their future career in this area is significant.

The application of a holistic approach, and thus the involvement of all stakeholders (parents, siblings, peers, teachers, policy makers, representatives of relevant institutions and business sector) that can help by identifying the most appropriate way for the development of individual talent is an important tool in the fostering and development of talent. Given the different levels of work with talent in different countries it is both efficient and necessary to develop activities aimed at disseminating good practices and initiatives in education in relation to this issue.

Recommended key activities:

- to ensure the development of talent already in pre-school education
- to implement the issue of talent support into the work of teachers, to ensure their training and skills necessary to work with talent
- to apply a holistic approach
- to raise awareness of the opportunities and best practices in the fostering and development of talent at all levels of education
- to link formal and informal education, to implement implicit, diverse, dual and online training in the educational process

3. Accentuating the need and importance of inclusive education and approach

A part of the issue of fostering and development of talent through education of the population is also a question about education of individuals from marginalized groups. Care of these groups helps to eradicate poverty in disadvantaged areas of each country and at the same time it prevents wasting of talent. Open society, such as the environment of the European Union, respects diversity and thus perceives the society as a single environment and does not eliminate any talents. Thanks to inclusion, it is possible to discover and develop even more talented individuals.

First of all, in order to strengthen inclusion in order to promote and develop talent, it is necessary to push through the opinion that everybody has talent, even the disadvantaged ones. At the same time, it is appropriate to link students with excellent results with those who do not stand out or are disadvantaged. Inclusive education does not mean just taking into account the specific needs in diverse environment, i.e. in an environment with marginalized groups, but it also means to take into account specific needs, capacities and capabilities of each individual. Furthermore, it is necessary to systematically ensure cooperation of specific organizations focused on diverse groups of individuals, to adapt the form of teaching and the evaluation system, and thus the overall integration process.

Recommended key activities:

- to create appropriate, stimulating and supportive environment
- to develop inclusive education respecting diversity, individual needs and specific circumstances of each child
- to foster and develop talent of all individuals

4. Taking into account the specific need when working with young talents

Young talents are the future of Europe and there is a need to realize that it is vital to support them, give them opportunities to excel and to ensure their social and economic growth. The current educational systems do not provide the students with sufficient incentives thanks to which they could think out of the box and find support for their ideas. Youth needs challenges and through them they can develop.

It is necessary to apply new approaches when working with youth or training teachers and mentors who have the greatest impact on them. Another problem is the lack of funding in certain areas, which is why the development of young people is stagnant and thereby there is a decline of the number of talents. First setbacks often discourage young people but despite this it is still possible to continue to develop their talent through the right form of support and motivation.

While working with youth, it is necessary to empower the youth in society and ensure sufficient number of qualified human capital which takes care and guide the young. Career counsellors and educators can make certain important and for the society indispensable specializations (e.g. science and technology) more attractive among the talented youth. The talented young people themselves stated that the key role in the development of talent have the teacher and the school. Thanks to them they realize that their talent has an impact on the society and that they can become role models and motivate other people.

Successful young talented individuals are at the same time role models for their peers and this brings a huge responsibility towards the society and their motivation. When developing their talent they need education that include skills usable in life, balanced work-study and leisure time, cooperation with real institutions and the opportunity to present themselves.

Recommended key activities:

- to develop cooperation with real institutions and researchers and to bring numerous opportunities for their self-realization and development (e.g. participation in an actual research)
- to ensure access to sufficient job opportunities
- to motivate and bring challenges
- to give the young talents the opportunity to present themselves

5. The involvement of private sector in the process of fostering and development of talent

Linking private sector to education should be one of the priorities in the fostering and development of talent. Through this link children could try what is it like to be an entrepreneur in real life. If the children are confronted with various obstacles and challenges their talent might appear sooner and during various projects they can learn how to think critically and creatively. Besides the invaluable experiences, children can learn how to work with resources in order to create and ensure sustainability which plays a key role nowadays.

The society must realize that it is necessary to support young talents, give them opportunities for growth, expose them with different environments and thus develop their global and entrepreneurial mindset. Through experience with real business children are building a greater sense for responsibility and it is possible to guide them to success and therefore to the improvement of the society. An important step is to link education with society and different sectors so that children, pupils and students can acquaint themselves with the reality outside the classroom. Digital age will require cooperation between the public and private sector mainly in education. Finding partners from these areas and their involvement in the educational process would allow bringing practical experience into schools.

The incorporation of entrepreneurial education and practical experiences into the traditional system is necessary for future success, innovations and competitiveness of Europe. At the same time, it is necessary to improve the skills of current employees in individual institutions and organizations in order to ensure their sustainability.

Recommended key activities:

- to engage private sector in the process of education
- to develop entrepreneurial and practical skills in cooperation with partners from practice at every level of education
- to support development of talent in relation to the needs and requirements of the labour market

In order to foster and develop talent it is therefore necessary to build a stable but flexible system and create a new set of tools that take into account all the key needs. The major step towards effective actions in this area is the building of a complex talent infrastructure, identifying executors of individual activities and determining the liability and means of control of their implementation. It is necessary to continue to develop political cooperation and promote talent with purpose and ethics. Through these activities we can ensure development of talent with regard to what is right and important.



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