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PROGRAM REPORT
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Organizers



Junior Achievement Romania (www.jaromania.org) was founded in 1993 as a non-profit association and it is a member of Junior Achievement Worldwide, USA www.ja.org Junior Achievement-Young Enterprise, Europe www.ja-ye.org. JA is the largest international organization for economical and entrepreneurial education, with „learning by doing“ programmes followed each year by more than 8 million students all around the world.



British Council (www.britishcouncil.ro) is Great Britain's international organization for educational opportunities and cultural relations. It is a registered charity with more than 7.900 operatives in 110 countries, connecting people worldwide with learning opportunities and creative ideas from the UK and building lasting relationship between UK and other countries.

I. Short presentation

What is Skills@Work Challenge?

Skills@Work Challenge is an intensive 24-hour workshop bringing together around 100 students to provide a solution for a business problem. Every event provides an exciting and educative challenge for participants, as they work with given access to tools, limited amount of time and no previous knowledge of eachothers' skills.

The *Skills@Work Challenge* program is developed nationally by **Junior Achievement Romania** and **British Council** to provide students in vocational schools with intense, active learning experiences in the field of entrepreneurship, which complement the existing curricula.

Other countries hosting national events in the 2008 – 2009 edition of *Skills@Work Challenge* are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Israel, Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

The Skills@Work Challenge Experience

Skills@Work Challenge participants develop communication, creativity and team-work skills. The event agenda is built as a continuous learning process aiming to provide educational experiences every step of the way:

- **team-building** – students are randomly split in groups of 5 and participate in interactive ice-breakers to better integrate into their new team
- **challenge presentation and instructions** – participants learn what the challenge and understand what is required for the success of an innovative product/service
- **team work** – teams develop an innovative business plan, with access to computers, Internet and guidance from business volunteers sharing their expertise
- **team presentations** – each team presents the chosen solutions in 4 minutes, being scored by the jury and the other participants
- **interviews** – the best scoring teams are interviewed in English by the jury to select the winners
- **final results** – the winners are announced and awarded

A special feature of the *Skills@Work Challenge* competition is the participation of business volunteers – professionals who enjoy working with young people and sharing their knowledge and experience. This contributes to participants' awareness of the business community and allows them to better understand how the economy works.

II. Schedule of local events in Romania – 2008 - 2009

The 2008 – 2009 schedule of *Skills@Work Challenge* in Romania comprised 3 local events in Cluj-Napoca, Iași and Bucharest, and a national final, hosted in Bucharest as well. Highschools were invited to select participating students and the teachers who joined them during key stages of the agenda.

The teams' performance was evaluated by judges representing JA Romania and British Council, County Educational Inspectorates, the host school, business volunteers and sponsors.



Skills@Work Challenge Cluj-Napoca – 15th – 16th of November, 2008

80 students from 16 vocational highschools in Cluj-Napoca participated at the event, aided by 6 business volunteers from **Banca Transilvania**. Their task was to *rethink the common water bottle to increase its value/utility*.

The event was hosted by the **Theoretical Highschool Nicolae Bălcescu**.

Skills@Work Challenge Iași – 24th – 25th of January, 2009

120 students from 22 vocational highschools in Iași participated at the event, aided by 7 business volunteers from **Banca Transilvania** (2), **Patronatul Județean al Intreprinderilor Mici și Mijlocii Iași** (2) and **Ziarul de Iași** (3).

The event was sponsored by **Radix Communications** and **Asociația de Sprijin Comunitar „Pentru un viitor mai bun”**. The **Costache Negruzzi National College** hosted the competition.



Skills@Work Challenge Bucharest – 21st of February, 2009



90 students from 25 vocational highschools in Bucharest participated at the event, aided by 8 business volunteers from **Banca Transilvania** (3) and **Oracle Romania**(5).

The event was sponsored by **Fischer International**, **SC Genel Tour SRL**, **Uniscan – Grup Educațional**, **Centrul de Carte Străină Sitka**, **La Fântâna** și **Okian-Longman**. The **Nichita Stănescu Vocational Highschool** hosted the competition.

III. National Final – February 2009

The national competition joined the teams which placed 1st and 2nd in local events to select 5 students for the international final in Sofia. The 30 participants met on the 22nd of February with the challenge to *conceive an active learning tool which uses technology for better performance in entrepreneurial education.*

The participants received guidance and advice from 6 business volunteers from **Banca Transilvania** (2) and **Oracle Romania** (4).

In order to select the best students for the international final in Sofia, each participant was scored by:

- *observers* who assessed teamwork skills, creativity and contribution (35%)
- *members of the jury* who assessed presentation skills, persuasion, English proficiency and the final proposal (50%)
- *his/her peers* (15%)

The members of the jury have been:

- Andrei Baican – Deputy Head of Corporate Clients, **Banca Transilvania**
- Eugen Stoica – Social Science General Inspector, **Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation**
- Liliana Bitu – Project Manager, CSR & Marketing, **Oracle Romania**
- Luiza Cristea – Program Manager, **Junior Achievement Romania**
- Ruxandra Popovici – Projects Manager, **British Council Romania**

Based on final scores, the 5 students selected to participate in the international final in Sofia are:

- Manca Alberto – **The International Computer Highschool**, Bucharest
- Naşcu Ioan – **Tiberiu Popoviciu Highschool of Computer Science**, Cluj-Napoca
- Pavel Tudor – **Tiberiu Popoviciu Highschool of Computer Science**, Cluj-Napoca
- Turcsanyi Georgiana Ramona – **Grigore Moisil Computers Science Highschool**, Iaşi
- Zoderu Andreea – **Costache Negruzzi National College**, Iaşi

The national final was sponsored by **Fischer International**, **Uniscan – Grup Educational**, **Centrul de Carte Străină Sitka**, **La Fântâna** și **Okian-Longman**. The **Nichita Stănescu Vocational Highschool** hosted the competition.

IV. International Final in Sofia, Bulgaria – March 2009

The international final in Sofia (11th – 13th of March) joined 60 students from vocational schools in 11 countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Israel, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Russia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

The challenge faced by the international teams was to provide *an entrepreneurial vision for an e-governance solution that would serve citizens and businesses.*

The members of the jury have been:

- Caroline Jenner – Executive Director **Junior Achievement – Young Enterprise Europe**
- Michael Moore – Director **British Council Bulgaria**
- Milena Stoycheva – Executive Director **Junior Achievement Bulgaria**
- Natasha Faith – **Young UN Entrepreneur** and Owner of **La Diosa**
- Ognian Kiriakov – General Director **Microsoft Bulgaria**
- Zoya Paunova – Executive Director **Astra Zeneca Bulgaria**

Two Romanian delegates have won prizes:

- Alberto Manca, from the International Computer Highschool in Bucharest, contributed to his team winning *1st Prize* for a proposal to transfer both voting and the electoral campaign online
- Andreea Zoderu, from Colegiul Național Costache Negruzzi in Iași, contributed to her team winning the *Teamwork Award*



Microsoft Romania, through its *Partners in Learning* program, supported the Romanian *Skills@Work Challenge* delegation to participate at the international final in Sofia, Bulgaria.

V. Testimonials

The things that I've liked most about this contest are the excellent organization, the quality of the staff, as well as the interaction between the participants. The competition has been a very valuable experience for the students who gained team spirit while developing their social skills. I have personally learned that I should never underestimate a student because I might find a teacher inside him.

Simona Hanca, teacher at the "Edmond Nicolau" Vocational Highschool in Cluj

Skills@Work Challenge is a wonderful competition which allowed me to practice what I knew about entrepreneurship. Limited time and resources, as well as working with young people which I didn't know made it all very interesting. I succeed in convincing my team-mates and we had very constructive debates when we disagreed. Presenting the project in English was a very interesting part of the experience and good public speaking practice.



When I joined the competition, my goal was to win. Looking back, I've made new friends, gained more self-confidence and even earned a prize.

Alberto Manca, participant at Skills@Work Challenge Bucharest and 1st prize winner at the international final in Sofia

The thing that I have appreciated the most is that I got to make new friends even though we started as teammates. I really enjoyed working with people that I didn't know beforehand. The best experience by far was the presenting our project, because it made us give our best and share the ideas we believed in with the others. I have learned that in order to succeed you need to: have a little bit of luck, be natural, have a good team and, of course, put a lot of work into it.

Turcsanyi Georgiana, participant Skills@Work Challenge Iași and international finalist in Sofia



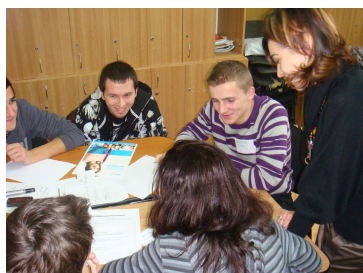
I liked the fact that we had to socialize (I have met new interesting people with whom I hope to keep in touch). The most valuable experience is the fact that I have learned to accept other people's opinions and then filter them through my own judgment.

I enjoyed working together with other students and, more important, speaking in front of more than 100 people without inhibitions.

Andreea Zoderu, participant Skills@Work Challenge Iași and Teamwork Award winner at the international final in Sofia

The first time I participated in S@WC, in Cluj, I was 'thrown' in a competition so different from what I had done before, from building teams with students from many schools to the ice-breakers helping us to know each other better. This competition was more useful than a classical academic contest, because we had to use our knowledge in more areas instead focusing on theory from a single subject.

Pavel Tudor, participant Skills@Work Challenge Cluj-Napoca and international finalist in Sofia



I loved to see that "the messenger generation" is not at all superficial, that the students have been very serious about this contest and that they were really into it. I also liked the topic and even though it was a little bit difficult for them, they managed more than honorably and did not give up. I also liked the idea of mixing students from different high schools in the same group. This way, they had the opportunity to communicate spontaneously, work as a team, exchange ideas and respect each other. It has definitely been a very interesting experience. Even though I don't have the skills of a teacher, I discovered that I am comfortable around children and I love helping them.

Oana Bugeag, business volunteer from **Ziarul de Iași**

VI. Media

Skills@Work Challenge has been widely covered, totaling **41 articles**, **3 radio broadcasts** and **5 TV appearances** in local and national channels.

The program has also been supported through a dedicated website. More information and media coverage available at www.skillsatwork.jaromania.org.

Alberto Manca și Andreea Zoderu, elevi la licee din București, respectiv Iași, pentru că au fost premiați la finala de la Sofia a celei mai recente ediții a competiției internaționale Skills@Work Challenge. Manca și echipa din care a făcut parte au conceput o soluție de e-government destinată consultărilor electorale. Competiția este organizată de British Council și Junior Achievement România.



Alberto Manca and Andreea Zoderu have received the Oskar Capital Award for their performance in the Skills@Work Challenge international final