DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO HOST THE WORLDSKILLS SOUTH AFRICA BIENNIAL NATIONAL COMPETITION, CONFERENCE AND NATIONAL ARTISAN CAREER FESTIVAL

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) will host the 4th WorldSkills South Africa (WSZA) biennial National Competition and National Artisan Career Festival at the Durban International Conference Centre in KwaZulu-Natal. The competition is planned to take place in March 2022. Once confirmed, the dates will be made public.

The WSZA National Competition takes place 3 years after the 45th WorldSkills International Competition in Russia, Kazan in September 2019. The 46th WorldSkills International Competition previously scheduled for September 2021 in Shanghai, China, had to be re-scheduled for 12-17 October 2022 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This postponement afforded member countries, including South Africa, time to focus on local competitions and other related activities in preparation for the WorldSkills Competition International in Shanghai, China in October 2022.

South Africa remained under lock-down for the better part of the year 2020. Once the covid-19 regulations were relaxed by the South African government in the year 2021, WSZA were able to start travelling between provinces in the country to host workshops with different stakeholders, to monitor and ensure the success of all WSZA Provincial Competitions in preparation for the 2022 WSZA National Competitions. The WSZA Provincial Competitions were a result of a rigorous and transparent sifting processes during local competitions, popularly known as local heats, which took place at colleges and workplaces or training centres level across the country.

The DHET hosts the biennial WSZA National Competitions as an important mechanism of promoting artisan skills as a viable career choice as well as to open up potential partnerships with industry. The WSZA National Competition supported by Regional Competitions provides a critical platform from which the country is able to assess the levels of apprenticeship and artisan training in addition to advocating for the uptake of artisan careers as careers of first choice.

Hosted under the theme "Ratcheting up the Production of 21st Century Artisans", the 2022 WSZA National Competition will incorporate a two day WSZA Conference at the Durban International Convention Centre parallel to the National Competition. The DHET is in the final stages of promulgating the National Apprenticeship and Artisan Development Strategy 2030. The conference will be used as a launching pad for the promulgated strategy. Also incorporated at the WSZA National Competition, will be the National Artisan Development Career Festival which aims to reduce, among others, the stigma related to artisan careers, provide
information on artisan careers and possible career projections, provide a recruitment platform for employers and provide an environment for Skills Development Partners to network and partner with industry. The festival will focus on display of skills (try a skill) that are in demand by industry and also provide a window into future artisan skills which may be required in the fourth industrial revolution.

Artisanal skills are seen as one of the mechanisms that will ensure that the majority of citizens access economic opportunities in order to contribute meaningfully to the economy with the skills they possess. It is for this reason and others that the National Development Plan has tasked the DHET with the goal to produce 30 000 artisans by 2030. The DHET has taken this obligation a step further by placing an obligation on the country to produce not only 30 000 artisans, but 30 000 QUALITY artisans.

To achieve such a significant growth not only needs considerable investment and commitment by all artisan development role players with a special focus on workplaces in South Africa. The WSZA programme plays a critical role in building bridges between all stakeholders within the apprenticeship and artisan development arena.

WSZA National Competitions offers participants huge benefits and opportunities. It is about more than winning and taking the prize home. WorldSkills competitions in general, including the WorldSkills International Competition, create opportunities for learners to become the very best version of themselves possible. They offer life changing pathway and opportunities that involve additional study and work experience. In particular, WSZA’s aim is to further develop the skills of the many young people who participate in WorldSkills South Africa events and to build their networking and communication skills through taking direction from industry peers and benchmarking their skills against those they compete with in the industry.

The winners at the National Competition will get an opportunity to represent the country at the WorldSkills Africa to be held in Swakopmund, Namibia, and WorldSkills International Competition in Shanghai, China to compete in different skills areas covering the disciplines of Construction and Building Technology; Manufacturing and Engineering Technology; Information and Communications; Social and Personal Services; Creative Arts and Fashion; and Transportation and Logistics.

The continental event, the second of its kind following the inaugural event staged in Kigali Rwanda in 2018, is staged in partnership with the African Union, under the aegis of WorldSkills International and the Namibian Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation. WorldSkills Namibia received the majority of votes from WorldSkills members and partners to organise WorldSkills Africa Competitions at the Skills Development in Africa meeting which was held alongside WorldSkills Kazan 2019, on 25 August 2019.
The 46th WorldSkills International Competition hosted in Shanghai, China later this year will feature over 1600 competitors from more than 60 countries and regions, competing in over 63 skills. WorldSkills competitions create a global platform to develop and help young people who want to change the lives and the fortunes of their communities and societies.

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