

## Training the trainers of crafts - Folk craft trainings in the Hungarian Heritage House

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### Background

In the second half of the 19th century, the rediscovery of folk art in Hungary began along several paths. On the one hand, artists sought inspiration from folk traditions; on the other, folk art production was seen as a means of providing livelihood. To this end, teachers traveled through rural areas and primarily trained young women in home-based female crafts. At the same time, from 1892 onward, organized vocational education in handicraft trades was launched. Teacher training in handicrafts also gained particular importance during this period, especially in women's industrial schools and teacher training institutions.

In the 1950s, the Institute of Folk Art was established, which later evolved into the Institute of Popular Culture, the Hungarian Institute of Culture, and eventually, in 2001, into their successor institution, the House of Traditions. These Budapest-based institutions have continuously played an active role in the field of folk craft education.

One concrete predecessor of today's folk craft training system was the workshop-based activity that developed into the so-called "Amateur Decorative Arts Movement." Folk art workshops played a crucial role in preserving and transmitting traditional craft techniques. Initially, most workshops focused on embroidery, and over several decades of operation, a workshop methodology gradually emerged. Sessions typically took place during the winter, once a week in the evenings, enabling participants to attend alongside their regular employment.

Workshop activities usually began with cross-stitch embroidery, and each year the pattern traditions of one or two regions were studied. Workshop leaders did not participate merely as instructors; they often learned together with the participants, jointly researching and processing the decorative art elements of a given region. Workshop leader training covered several fields, allowing participants to specialize in embroidery, weaving, or woodcarving. The Institute of Popular Culture also organized formal workshop leader training. Within this system, workshop leader licenses could be obtained through a progressive structure of three categories—A, B, and C.

These workshops played an essential role in preserving folk art values, and their work resulted in a series of collection and methodological publications that are still in use today. The "Amateur Decorative Arts Movement" had a particularly significant impact on the survival of traditions by fostering community-based creation and the conscious processing of traditional motifs.

Another direct predecessor was the Folk Art Studio for Young People, also operating within the Institute of Folk Art, which later developed into an intellectual movement known as the "Nomadic Generation." This movement represented a holistic approach to folk tradition. Its goal was to enable young people to learn about and experience a natural way of life, the importance of

communal creation, and the value of traditional knowledge. To this end, numerous field collections were organized, contributing to the documentation and preservation of folk culture.

The movement also played a significant role in systematizing folk art and folk traditions through the publication of scholarly materials. These publications not only documented the techniques of traditional crafts and folk decorative arts but also supported their transmission within communities.

In addition, experimental “playhouse” programs were launched, introducing participants to folk crafts, customs, and community activities through interactive sessions. These playhouses offered not only craft activities but also opportunities to experience folk traditions as living practices.

### **Training in Folk Craft Professions**

Over recent decades, training in folk craft professions has undergone significant development. Programs launched from 1990 onward paid special attention to educating people from disadvantaged backgrounds, primarily through specialized vocational schools. This provided opportunities for individuals for whom mastering traditional crafts represented not only cultural value but also a means of livelihood.

From 1993, folk craft training became available nationwide within the framework of the National Qualifications Register (OKJ). This ensured that those interested in handicrafts could learn trades under the guidance of qualified instructors and obtain officially recognized qualifications.

In 1994, training for Folk Toy and Small Craft Instructors was regulated, enabling participants to acquire both pedagogical and practical knowledge to transmit folk crafts. At the same time, Playhouse Leader training was launched, providing not only technical mastery of crafts but also instructional skills.

### **Folk Craft Training System in Hungary**

- Basic art education (within the public school system)
- Secondary art vocational schools (within the public school system)
- Accredited courses – 40, 60, 80, or 120 hours (for adults)
- Folk playhouse activity leader training
- State-recognized vocational training (within the public school system and for adults)
- Continuing professional development
- Folk applied art qualification and national competitions

### **Basic Art Education**

#### ***Fine and Applied Arts Branch – Folk Art Genre***

- Folk toy practices
- Basic visual knowledge of folk art

#### ***Departmental Creative and Workshop Practice Subjects***

- Woodcraft creative practice
- Pottery creative practice
- Folk leathercraft creative practice
- Folk textile craft (weaving, embroidery, felting) creative practice

- Plant-fiber crafts (cornhusk, reed, willow, straw object making)
- Ethnography

### **Accredited Folk Craft Courses**

Accredited courses play a key role in ensuring quality within training systems and supporting professional development. In many cases, they serve as the first entry point into learning folk craft professions.

The development of training curricula has a long tradition within the history of the House of Traditions and its predecessor institutions. From the 1990s onward, training programs were developed within the accreditation system and continue to operate in their current form. Accreditation guarantees the professional credibility and quality of these courses.

In 2015, the House of Traditions accredited a total of 36 courses with durations of 30, 60, and 120 hours. These courses covered the fields of folk crafts, folk music, folk dance, and storytelling.

One of the most important goals of accredited training is to ensure professionally guaranteed quality and provide entry opportunities into higher-level educational programs. These courses not only establish solid foundations but also enable professional advancement.

### **Folk Playhouse Activity Leader Training**

The aim of playhouse training is to provide instructors and activity leaders with appropriate knowledge for transmitting folk traditions. During the accredited 120-hour program, participants acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also practical and methodological skills that enable them to lead activities effectively.

The program places particular emphasis on sparking interest, as many participants discover the beauty of traditional crafts through exposure to folk culture and handicrafts. Ethnographic and craft knowledge play a central role in the training, enabling participants to acquire a comprehensive understanding. Developing an ethnographic perspective and shaping attitudes are key elements, helping participants understand the deeper cultural and social contexts of folk crafts.

The curriculum is divided into several parts. Participants first become familiar with natural raw materials found in the environment, followed by simple, archaic craft technologies. Using these materials and techniques, they create simple functional objects and toys. The curriculum is organized around the events of the annual cycle, following folk customs and the cyclical changes of nature. This approach helps participants understand how craft activities are connected to traditional celebrations and natural ways of life.

### **Training topics and content elements:**

- Natural materials used in folk crafts
- Simple, archaic craft technologies
- Creating simple functional objects and toys using these materials and techniques
- Holistic approach, ethnographic background, and folklore elements
- Curriculum organized along the annual cycle, following folk customs and the cycle of nature

## State-Recognized Vocational Qualifications

State-recognized folk craft qualifications are available in various training formats, depending on whether learners choose school-based or adult education. In school-based training, vocational education lasts two years, during which students acquire folk craft professions through both theoretical and practical instruction.

The only institution offering exclusively folk craft education within the school system is the Nádudvar Folk Craft Technical Secondary School and Dormitory, operating since 1992 and providing both a secondary school diploma and vocational qualifications.

Adult education programs are shorter, totaling 845 hours. These programs are conducted at the House of Traditions or the Békés County Folk Art Association, where participants gain comprehensive craft skills and folk art knowledge. Upon completion, participants receive an officially recognized intermediate-level vocational qualification.

Currently, qualifications are available in the following professions: Lace Maker; Potter; Folk Leatherworker; Gingerbread Maker; Felt Maker; Carpet Weaver; Weaver; Woodworker; Straw, Cornhusk and Reed Object Maker; Blue-Dye Textile Maker; Slipper Maker; Basket Weaver; Hand and Machine Embroiderer.

## Folk Craft Vocational Training Program

### I. Operating a Folk Craft Enterprise

- General ethnography and folk art
- Art history
- Basic professional knowledge of folk crafts
- Folk craft enterprise management and marketing
- Drawing practice

### II. Practical Skills

- Professional skills
- Professional ethnography
- Professional practice
- Professional drawing practice
- Occupational safety and accident prevention

## Caft\_ME (Craft Media & Education)

Caft\_ME (Craft Media & Education) is an innovative platform focusing on the education of folk crafts, positioned at the intersection of digital learning environments and the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. Its primary goal is to make the complete process of traditional craft techniques and professions—from initial material preparation to the completion of finished objects—accessible to a wide audience through visually rich digital tools. In doing so, it contributes to the preservation of folk craft heritage and supports the transmission of practical skills and traditional perspectives.

These materials cannot replace knowledge acquisition that requires personal participation, but they support home-based learning, practice, and the deepening of knowledge. The videos are primarily intended for individuals who already possess basic practical skills in a given craft. The

goal is to encourage and support home practice, thereby enhancing the qualitative development of those learning traditional crafts.

### **Continuing Education and Professional Community Building**

For those who already possess professional knowledge, the House of Traditions also provides professional development opportunities. These focus on specific themes—such as techniques or regions—through theoretical lectures and practical demonstrations and workshops.

### **Folk Applied Art Qualification**

The folk applied art qualification is administered by the House of Traditions as a public authority responsible for heritage preservation and the care of folk traditions. Its purpose is to award the title of Folk Applied Artist.

The qualification process is based on a set of criteria developed by folk craft professionals themselves. This ensures that the awarding of the title is objective and professionally grounded, taking into account craftsmanship, tradition preservation, and technical excellence. In Hungary, the certification system has existed since the 1950s, providing a long-standing framework for evaluating folk craft professions. Over the decades, the evaluation system has continuously evolved to ensure the recognition and professional credibility of traditional crafts.

### **National Folk Art Competitions and Exhibitions**

National Folk Art Competitions and Exhibitions play a prominent role in preserving and promoting folk crafts. These events provide creators with opportunities to showcase their work while encouraging experimentation with new techniques and the further development of traditional crafts. Through these competitions and exhibitions, the general public becomes acquainted with outstanding Hungarian folk artists who have preserved and transmitted traditions for many years. The events aim to build bridges between masters and audiences while creating an inspiring environment for those interested in folk crafts.

