



Illustrative Case Study (K)

European e-Competence Framework (e-CF)

for ICT professional associations

ABOUT THE e-CF. The European e-Competence Framework (e-CF) provides a reference of 36 competences as required and applied at the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) workplace, using a common language for competences, skills and capability levels that can be understood across Europe. As the first sector-specific implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the e-CF was designed and developed for application by ICT service, user and supply companies, for managers and human resource (HR) departments, and for education institutions and training bodies, and other organizations in public and private sectors.

The framework was developed under the umbrella of the CEN ICT Skills Workshop through a process of close cooperation between ICT business and human resource (HR) experts, stakeholders and policy institutions from many different countries and at the EU level. Published by CEN for the first time in 2008 and followed by a further enhanced version 2.0 in 2010, the framework brings benefits to a growing community of users throughout Europe and overseas.

To support e-CF application within multiple environments, a series of illustrative case studies provide examples, benefits and hints of how to make best use of the e-CF.

The following case study illuminates the e-CF application from the perspective of ICT professional associations.

Key perspectives

- Assessment
- Benchmark criteria
- Community building

Summary

In this example, it is shown how the e-CF can be used to support the assessment of entry criteria for members of professional associations and to assist in the evaluation of member's skills and competence.

AIP-ITCS (Associazione Informatici Professionisti – Italian Computer Society) is an Italian organisation grouping computer professionals, from all backgrounds, whether employees, entrepreneurs or self-employed. To become members they must prove that they have specialist skills in Information Technology, based upon their qualifications and/or experience. Established in December 1991, AIP-ITCS is a non-profit-making association active throughout Italy and a member of CEPIS (Council of European Professional Informatics Societies), since 1998. The association provides political representation, professional qualification, training courses and general services for members. Before acceptance into the association, ICT professionals must demonstrate their competences by means of a CV, certifications and an interview. With the advent of the e-CF, the association has established a sense of belonging as all members undergo the same assessment procedure based upon the e-CF. To succeed and become a member is seen as prestigious as successful applicants gain a sense of common recognition and mutual understanding of each other's achievements.

IWA ITALY (International Webmasters Association Italia) is the Italian organization grouping web professionals, from all backgrounds, whether employees, entrepreneurs or self-employed. To gain membership applicants must endorse and follow a code of ethics and, via a CV, map their personal competences to Web skill profiles, a Generation 3 (G3) ICT profile framework, entirely based upon e-CF 2.0 and following the approach of the European ICT Professional Profiles (see case study P). The association provides political representation, professional qualification, training courses and general services to members. With the advent of the European e-Competence Framework, the association has created a working group to generate web skills profiles strongly based on the e-CF.

e-CF Value

Prior to the e-CF, there was no standard definition for competence description and definition. The associations had to define internal rules and use internal job profile descriptions, some dating from 1998. IWA Italy has defined internal rules and internal job profile descriptions involving more than 200 representatives from industry, associations and the public sector. There are now 21 G3 Web Skill Profiles (<http://www.skillprofiles.eu>) and they are becoming the reference for trade unions and other organisations that promote the web profession for “job and ask search” services.

The e-CF is now at the core of assessment procedures and seen by both associations as a way to link professional qualification with the European environment. By mapping skills and competences with the e-CF, the associations can use a standard vocabulary and standard definitions applicable in Europe and beyond.

Challenges encountered

The e-CF is focused upon competences but the associations previously provided job profile based qualifications, therefore implementation steps have been taken to rationalise the two perspectives.

ICT changes very quickly and the associations are aware of the need to also modify job profile definitions and to include new profiles every one or two years, to maintain currency. This cycle will be coordinated with that of e-CF updates.

Benefits highlighted

As a single point of competence reference, the e-CF provides a stable, consistent and multi-stakeholder supported structure that is sustainable. Associations need to be confident that the underpinning structure of a selected framework has credibility with its membership and this is demonstrated by AIP-ITCSs choice of the e-CF and IWAs creation of Generation 3 Web skills profiles based upon the e-CF. IWA/HWG International, the international chapter of IWA/HWG is also recognized by CEN as a standardization consortium and therefore the G3 Web Skills Profiles will be promoted within and also outside of Europe in over 100 countries.

The method adopted

AIP-ITCS is developing an online software tool to provide the self-assessment and validation to be used by ICT professionals seeking association membership. Using this software, any professional will be able to test his/her competences and compare them with requirements of the association. In turn, the association will offer an instant, automatic assessment of suitability.

IWA have provided a reference document for self-assessment and validation which can be applied to membership or used universally by professionals or organizations for comparison and identification of market requirements.

Expansion to other examples

This study is an early example of ICT Professionals Associations using the e-CF to assess people or enterprises and to strengthen the sense of community. Other similar organisations may follow and use the e-CF as a benchmark for membership criteria.

Further case studies such as D, H and I, also demonstrate how the e-CF can be deployed and used as an assessment or benchmarking tool.