



Illustrative Case Study (E)

European e-Competence Framework (e-CF)

to build SME job descriptions

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 a medium sized ICT supply company.

Key perspectives

- Job description development
- Intercompany communication
- Recruitment aid

Summary

A German medium sized enterprise (approx. 300 employees at headquarters) provides enterprises solutions for administration and operation of complete ICT-infrastructures. It has used the e-CF for re-structuring and harmonization of internal job descriptions, articulating competencies in a common and understandable way. This work has also supported recruitment requirements and aided better descriptions for service offerings. The end result was that all participants were very comfortable with the outcomes and with the enhancement of collaboration between ICT and HR.

e-CF Value

The e-CF provided the engine to describe requirements and competences in a consistent and commonly understandable way. The framework facilitated communication and collaboration between the internal functions of HR and ICT operations. Prior to using the e-CF staff from ICT and HR talked at cross-purposes, typically ICT people spoke about special technical issues and HR people about training issues. Deploying the e-CF ICT executives and HR representatives collectively described;

- Requirements of existing and future workplaces and work processes
- Existing and needed competences.

Challenges encountered

ICT executives and HR representatives, within the company, in principle, pursued one common objective: to support the growth of the enterprise. Furthermore, they were familiar with each other and motivated to work together. However when in engaging in dialogue they had many differences of opinion. It became clear that the reason was owing to a lack of understanding of basic terminology of the e-CF.

Using the following definitions, collaboration and mutual understanding was restored.

- Competence is ability [German meaning: “Können” is broader than “Fähigkeit”]
- Competences include knowledge, skills, also soft skills, and attitudes
- Competences are not the same as performance or requirements
- Soft skills are integrated in competence and level descriptions, the e-CF doesn't differ competences in the popular categories “functional”, “methodical”, “social” and “individual”
- Competence development is more than education or qualification. Competence cannot be determined by examination alone; the best confirmation of competence is to do, to document and to consider real work at different levels of complexity

Benefits highlighted

The main aim of the German enterprise was to harmonize internal job descriptions for better support to enterprise growth. For this purpose, it was necessary to describe requirements and competences in a common and understandable way. The e-CF was used to make collaboration between ICT and HR department easier, and optionally, an external e-CF expert was deployed to support this aim.

The method adopted

A series of workshops were held between HR and the ICT operations teams, facilitated by an e-CF expert. The implementation steps were as follows;

1. The collaborative team re-structured and harmonized the internal job descriptions.
2. In a further step new job descriptions were related to qualifications (from the German Advanced IT Training System – AITTS) or Training Options (ITIL, network administration etc.). Using the e-CF the ICT executives expressed their requirements in a way, that the HR department were able to recruit people with suitable qualifications and improve internal competence development.

The most important paper used in this workshop was the e-CF overview scheme. This scheme provides an outline of the technical basis and the process structure of the e-CF. See Table 1 below.

European e-Competence Framework 2.0 overview

Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3				
5 e-Comp. areas (A – E)	36 e-Competences identified	e-Competence proficiency levels e-1 to e-5, related to EQF levels 3-8				
		e-CF levels identified per competence				
		e-1	e-2	e-3	e-4	e-5
A. PLAN	A.1. IS and Business Strategy Alignment					
	A.2. Service Level Management					
	A.3. Business Plan Development					
	A.4. Product or Project Planning					
	A.5. Design Architecture					
	A.6. Application Design					
	A.7. Technology Watching					
	A.8. Sustainable Development					
B. BUILD	B.1. Design and Development					
	B.2. Systems Integration					
	B.3. Testing					
	B.4. Solution Deployment					
	B.5. Documentation Production					
C. RUN	C.1. User Support					
	C.2. Change Support					
	C.3. Service Delivery					
	C.4. Problem Management					
D. ENABLE	D.1. Information Security Strategy Development					
	D.2. ICT Quality Strategy Development					
	D.3. Education and Training Provision					
	D.4. Purchasing					
	D.5. Sales Proposal Development					
	D.6. Channel Management					
	D.7. Sales Management					
	D.8. Contract Management					
	D.9. Personnel Development					
	D.10. Information and Knowledge Management					
E. MANAGE	E.1. Forecast Development					
	E.2. Project and Portfolio Management					
	E.3. Risk Management					
	E.4. Relationship Management					
	E.5. Process Improvement					
	E.6. ICT Quality Management					
	E.7. Business Change Management					
	E.8. Information Security Management					
	E.9. IT Governance					

The schematic acted as a catalyst for mutual understanding between HR and ICT functions by use of a common language enabling agreements on job description creation.

The results were:

- A specific new job description expressed with e-CF competencies
- A generic schema for re-structuring and harmonizing all job descriptions
- A consolidated method enabling staff from ICT and HR to translate existing job profiles and to describe new jobs by using the e-CF competencies and levels in a common and understandable way

Expansion to other examples

The above case illustrates how the e-CF has been used for enhancing communication between HR and ICT for harmonizing job descriptions and more targeted recruitment. The e-CF can also support communication of ICT supply competence to customers or for internal profile structuring and assessment.

References

- Further information can be found by accessing the user guide at the home page of the e-CF website. <http://www.ecompetences.eu/1386,Home.html>
- Also see CEN Workshop Agreement (CWA) 16367: „e-CF into SME’s“
<http://www.cen.eu/cen/Sectors/Sectors/ISSS/CWAdownload/Pages/ICT-Skills.aspx>
- A simple online tool for building profiles can be accessed at
<http://profiletool.ecompetences.eu/>