



Illustrative Case Study (O)

Using e-CF to integrate or relate to other frameworks

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 owners and creators of new frameworks.

Key perspectives

- Use of the e-CF in an established structure
- Relating the e-CF to other frameworks
- Relating workplace and qualification perspective by e-CF and EQF

Summary

Many ICT competence, skills, qualification and profile frameworks exist around Europe and it is often difficult to relate and compare them to each other for mutual benefit. The European e-Competence Framework establishes a European standard for ICT competences and skills description as needed and applied at the Professionals' workplace. It is sufficiently generic to be adaptable to the requirements of different countries, different companies and organisations and to technological evolutions and ICT service developments over the next few years.

The French Association of large enterprise ICT demand companies, CIGREF, has used the e-CF to benefit its membership. CIGREF membership is formed from approximately 60 French major companies using Information Systems (IS), as an example from energy, finances, automotive and administration sectors.

CIGREF have established an IT job profile framework, which has existed for the past 20 years, named "CIGREF's nomenclature of IT job profiles". This framework describes a set of ICT job roles with their mission, activities and competences. The CIGREF job profile framework is regularly reviewed and maintained by a group of HR Managers. The latest version was published in 2011, and it now uses the e-CF as a basic reference for describing competences relevant to each job profile. Around 50-60% of CIGREF members use the CIGREF framework.

In Germany, the e-CF was used to express the content of the National ICT Professional Profiles that are the basis of a sophisticated qualification system consisting of Advanced IT Training system (AITTS) and Profiles from "Duale Ausbildung" (dual education).

e-CF Value

The e-CF brings the required solution to standardize and provide a common language describing ICT competences. By using the e-CF, CIGREF's nomenclature has achieved competence coherence to facilitate assessment and definition of activities in role and job positions.

By adding stable and complete descriptions of competences to their framework, CIGREF's membership, training organisations, recruitment agency, etc. now possess a tool to share descriptions across all aspects of job roles, from mission to competences and in a consistent way.

The parallel applications of the e-CF in France and Germany facilitated direct comparison between French and German Profiles for mutual understanding and learning. This task would have been almost impossible prior to existence of the e-CF.

Challenges encountered

For each job profile, the CIGREF HR members identified the e-competences that are used in the context of their enterprise and the levels required and when a majority agreed, the e-competences were accepted in the description of the job profile. This work was necessarily long, with extensive discussion as there were various perspectives to consider and some enterprises needed to amend their viewpoints and accept that some poor choices had been made in the past. The end result showed that the investment was worthwhile; the CIGREF framework is now a broadly accepted reference tool usable by many disparate organisations.

In Germany the competence identification process for each profile was relatively easy, as profile content had been established by multi-stakeholder consensus, additionally, the profile descriptions are work process oriented and very close to the concept of the e-CF.

A challenging task in general, is the identification or comparison of competence levels between different frameworks. The strongest disparities are found between educational and enterprise structures. From the educational perspective, levels are very important, because they represent eligibility. From the enterprise perspective, levels of competence are mostly proficiency levels. Consequently the e-CF levels are different from levels from educational frameworks and also from the European Qualification Framework (EQF). Nevertheless, it is possible to establish a consistent relationship between the e-CF and educational frameworks that can be used to establish linkage or support interpretation between different structures.

Benefits highlighted

Benefitting from an existing single European solution, instead of investing further work in definition of competences, was clearly seen as a big benefit by CIGREF and its members. The e-CF enabled communication within the HR group and it encouraged and supported the increasing trend which can be observed within French companies changing perspective from profiles towards, competences. The e-CF was seen as a key driver for discussing and growing understanding of the competence concept. Early skepticism of European and large company involvement in the e-CF development initiative was overcome by a convincing methodology. The definition of capability levels independent from the concept of “seniority levels” was also seen as a compelling added value component.

By using the e-CF, an International dimension was added to both frameworks the French CIGREF and the German Advanced IT Training system.

The method adopted

The aim of the CIGREF framework is to support enterprises in building their own internal HR frameworks.

The most important rule of framework development and regular maintenance is “the consensus”; only input and that content is agreed by a majority of CIGREF’s members.. To fill and to complete the CIGREF nomenclature, many enterprises agreed to share their capability and experience and opened their own frameworks. This approach meant that the tool consisted of descriptions that are prevalent in a majority of CIGREF companies.

Before the European e-Competence Framework, the competences were a list "à la prévert"; without standardisation in definitions and containing much redundancy and not very useful as interpretation varied considerably across member companies.

The approach to relating the e-CF to other frameworks depends on the basic principles of the framework selected, its function, its structure and its content.

The German System of job profiles in vocational and advanced IT training (AITTS), has been the subject of similar experience where similarly constructed profiles were systematically related to competences and levels of the e-CF.

Expansion to other examples

The above demonstrates how the French association, CIGREF, enriched their existing job profile framework by using the e-CF as a consistent and Internationally understandable reference for competence. The German professional training system used e-CF to express existing national profiles in a Europe-wide shared language.

Connecting the e-CF to any other type of ICT work related frameworks is possible, examples are available from, SFIA (Skills for the information age), Eucip, Intel, EURO-INF Framework and others.

Conversely, when there is the intention to create a new framework, the e-CF can be used as a shared reference and starting point. This was the case in Estonia (see case study N)

Reference

- User guide for the application of the e-CF, chapter 4
http://www.ecompetences.eu/site/objects/download/5999_EUeCF2.0userguide.pdf
- Die deutschen Aus- und Weiterbildungsberufe im europäischen e-Competence Framework (IG Metall, Frankfurt am Main, 2010)