



Illustrative Case Study (N)

e-CF for European and National policy makers

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 European and National policy makers.

Key perspectives

- Ensuring qualified ICT workforce in a long-term
- Communication between policy makers and ICT business
- ICT Curricula (e-Curricula) building
- Cross European common language

Summary

From inception, the European e-Competence Framework initiative featured close cooperation between market stakeholders and experts from ICT industry, ICT qualification and HR development, and policy-making institutions. Thanks to this collaborative process, the e-CF was developed as a component of the European Commission's e-Skills Strategy for the 21st century. This established important political support and provided the e-CF, from commencement, with the necessary political credibility for acceptance from a broad variety of stakeholders.

In consequence, using the e-CF for policy making at different levels across the European Union is straight forward. The e-CF has served as a key reference for several studies and activities carried out by the European Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry, for example, "European Quality labels for training fostering e-skills for competitiveness and innovation" and "European ICT Professionalism", and it has become a key element of the recently launched European Commission Initiative "Grand Coalition for ICT Jobs – filling the gap by 2020".

At national levels, Estonia, The Netherlands and Ireland provide excellent examples of how to apply the e-CF for country-specific ICT workforce development and policy generation. In Estonia, the Qualifications Authority has used the e-CF as a basis for dialogue with ICT employers to gain an understanding of market needs for new qualifications. Founded on the e-CF, Estonia created new occupational qualification standards to feed ICT curricula development for both, vocational and higher education and training. In the Netherlands, the e-CF is established as the key reference for development of a National e-Skills strategy through multi-stakeholder dialogue led by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation. In both cases the e-CF was translated into national language. Ireland included the e-CF in a 2013 Action Plan for Jobs, launched on 22nd February 2013 by the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister).

e-CF Value

The multi-stakeholder collaboration between public institutions, business and education, upon which the e-CF is founded, provides a framework of good technical quality embedded in real-life practicality. Political trust is affirmed from the development umbrella provided by the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) and backed by the European Commission.

The European dimension, achieved by exchanging and engaging many national perspectives, makes the framework a valuable tool for multiple applications in a wide variety of environments.

Challenges encountered

For many the e-CF with its focus on competence is a new concept and it takes time to fully understand. This can mean that it is a challenge to convince some stakeholders that the e-CF is a valid option and worthy of the investment of time and resources necessary for implementation.

For instance, in Estonia, when the Qualification Authority presented the e-CF to the ICT employers, the dialogue at the beginning did not succeed as well as hoped. It was only when an expert from the Estonian Association of Information Technology and Telecommunications was identified to explain all perspectives; the business, the qualification environment and the bridging concept of competence, that communication became easier. Employers feared significant bureaucracy, when hearing the framework came from Europe, they thought it might take years to implement, be complicated and not efficient. The expert, who supported the framework communication, helped his national colleagues to understand the benefits to different stakeholders; that the e-CF could

quickly identify priorities for ICT curricula development and improve the quality of ICT education. Looking more closely at the e-CF it was understood that it could be applied efficiently and it was then quickly adopted.

Native speaking expert interaction achieves national translation of the e-CF; ideally, the translations are officially recognized by the National Standardization body. The technical development process of translation needs moderating and therefore takes time and this collaboration with official Standardization bodies was perceived in some cases as time consuming and slow. However, the fact that at the end there is only one, officially recognized high quality translation justifies the investment.

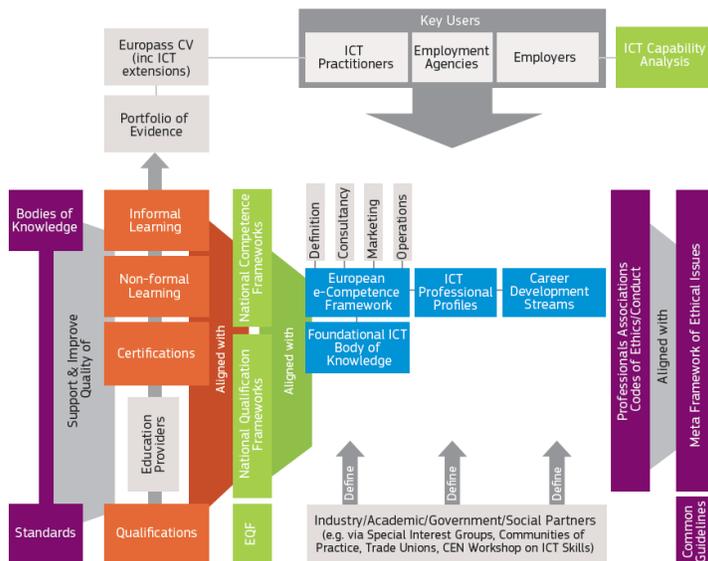
Benefits highlighted

The provision of the e-CF maintains a consistent perspective across all stakeholder environments, and facilitates, for instance, dialogue between ministries and national authorities, ICT employers and qualification providers. The e-CF facilitates exchange of views, unifies language, and promotes consensus. The framework is the fruit of multiple expert input across the EU and can therefore be seen as a technical “quintessence” of current ICT HR know-how. The International dimension of the e-CF and its ease in application within a local environment also strengthens its value. A special benefit lies in the compliance between the e-CF and the European Qualifications framework (EQF), which provides the e-CF with another compelling argument for implementation in European and National environments.

The method adopted

At a European level, case study G explains in more detail how the e-CF served as a key reference for the EC initiated project “European Quality labels for training fostering e-skills for competitiveness and innovation”. The project “Towards a European framework for ICT Professionalism” identified four key pillars (e-Competences, ICT Profiles, Ethics and Body of knowledge), with the e-CF at the heart of a EU-wide shared professionalism concept.

The European perspective: Towards a common framework of ICT Professionalism



At national levels, each of the three e-CF exemplar countries adopted a different implementation strategy. Estonia started quickly with a practical implementation, once the first communication barrier was overcome, and it was clear that both the Estonian Qualifications Authority and the Estonian Association of Information Technology and Telecommunications approved the e-CF as an excellent basis for their dialogue and for developing new qualifications. Based on the e-CF, they jointly created occupational qualification standards and used them as the basis for developing new ICT curricula. The e-CF applied as a shared reference facilitated the creation of new occupational qualification standards in short time, approximately 3 months per Profile.

The Netherlands started at a higher level of policy making, by taking the e-CF as a key reference for aligning their national e-Skills strategy. At the outset many different stakeholders were involved with the aim of achieving a sustainable long-term strategy.

In Ireland, the 2013 action plan promotes professionalism through use of the e-CF at an EU and national level; to raise awareness of the e-CF through industry events and to align national standards and certification work with the program of the Grand Coalition for ICT Jobs launched by the European Commission in March. This is a good example of European and national policies become more connected for mutual benefit.

How to get your National translation

The European e-Competence Framework document (CEN Workshop agreement – CWA 16234) exists in the three official languages of CEN, namely English, German and French. Other language versions in Italian, Dutch, Estonian and Russian have been added thanks to specific national initiatives.

The document translation into national languages makes e-CF implementation process easier. CEN is the copyright owner of the CWA 16234 on behalf of its members, which are the national Standardization Bodies. CEN grants exclusively to its members the assigned exploitation rights for the purpose of publishing, reproducing and distributing by any means the CEN publications in accordance with appropriate agreements.

CEN members may translate the CWA into their national language, where that language is not one of the three official languages, and certify the accuracy of the translation. It is to be noted that there shall only be one definitive language version of any CEN publication per language, the one made available by the Standardization Body. There are two possible ways for the National Standardization bodies to publish the document:

- Simple publication bearing the National Standardization body logo and a disclaimer stating that the translation is the official version of the CWA XXX in the language concerned and, in case of litigation, the official version in English published by CEN as CWA 16234 Part 1-2-3 will prevail
- National (pre)standard translated in the context of a national technical committee set up by the National Standardization body. In this case the body shall identify the appropriate stakeholders to take part in the committee. Colleagues from National Standardization bodies can provide guidance on how to kick off the process.

Once a national translation is available, it may be easily published via www.ecompetences.eu and also appear in the e-CF profiling online tool: <http://profiletool.ecompetences.eu/>

Expansion to other examples

The examples from European level, Estonia, The Netherlands and Ireland show how the e-CF can serve as a useful basis for policy making for the ICT workforce in different environments. The e-CF also serves as a shared resource in other countries, including in France (see case study O), Germany (see case study O), Italy, Poland and Russia.

References

- “European Quality labels for training fostering e-skills for competitiveness and innovation” - See case study G
- European Framework for ICT Professionalism: www.ict-prof.eu
- Grand Coalition for ICT Jobs
<http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/grand-coalition-digital-jobs-0>