European Informatics Skills Structure (EISS)

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Abstract
This paper introduces two different views of looking at professional development of the informatics professional. A top-down classification results in descriptions of "Skill cells" in the European Informatics Skills Structure. These descriptions detail tasks and attributes, entry requirements and required training, development. A bottom-up description of the informatics professional work area is in terms of 'Tasks', respectively 'Functions'. The granularity of these units of work is designed as to fit into any classification model. The paper shows how organizations can use either of the two approaches, and that even more detailed units of work can be derived through the top-down EISS approach.

Keywords
Informatics, taxonomies, levels of competence, business and industry requirements, professional profiles

1 INTRODUCTION

A Scoping Study, 'Getting Our Act Together', last year identified 43 national bodies involved in the development of Information Systems (IS) skills in the United Kingdom. Despite the work of such bodies there
remains widespread shortage in IS skills, coupled with an information shortage of precise labour market intelligence.
(British Computer Society, 1997.)

What applies to the United Kingdom also applies to all other European countries:
• one can identify many bodies involved in the development of informatics professionals;
• there is a widespread shortage in informatics professionals;
• there are no standard naming systems for IS-skills.

For example, a function which one organization calls a ‘systems analyst’, differs from what other organizations think it is. However, a good notion of what is to be understood under a certain function name is essential in the informatics area. It is the first step to the solving of the shortage of information technology (IT) professionals and to the proper education of people in the IT-profession, which means an education of people who are needed by organizations.

The European Informatics Skills Structure (EISS) is a European approach to solve these problems. EISS is publicized widely throughout Europe by the Council of European Informatics Societies (CEPIS) with a view to its general implementation and use in public and private sector organizations involved in informatics. The goals of EISS are to:
• provide standards and guidelines for high quality performance by informatics practitioners;
• build frameworks for training in employment;
• improve the planning of professional and career development for practitioners;
• establish, together with international and national bodies which are responsible for education and training policies, statements of academic and professional qualifications to facilitate entry into and career development within informatics (Council of European Professional Informatics Societies, 1992).

This paper outlines the work done by the CEPIS Professional Development and Qualification Task Force on the development of the European Informatics Skills Structure. In this respect it must be noted that organizations can be in stages according to the view they have on IS skills development. EISS and other standards are not always suitable in all stages. The paper gives guidance to organizations which have to make a choice of standard for IS skills development. It also shows ways in which EISS can be of use to organizations in the different stages.

2 THE AREA OF THE INFORMATICS PROFESSIONAL

According to the definition by the Dutch Standards Institute informatics is the domain of both the study of information related to information systems and to the processing, transfer and use of information, principally, although not necessarily,