

Meeting Global IT Skills Needs – the Role of Professionalism  
October 25-27<sup>th</sup> 2002

Final Report

I attach a copy of the Press Release issued following of this event which was held at Woking, Surrey, United Kingdom. The event was sponsored by IFIP, WITSA and OECD. The Summary Proceedings can be downloaded from [www.globalITskills.org](http://www.globalITskills.org)

The event was attended by 35 experts from 14 countries in 5 continents around the world. As you can see in the Summary Proceedings the speakers provided excellent input to the very constructive discussions which took place at the end of each session.

The resulting actions are listed in full in the report. The main agreement was to continue activities to:

- develop a high level reference model covering groups including IT professionals, IT practitioners and others
- develop an inventory of IT professional registration arrangements in support of international mobility
- explore options for extending international equivalencing of IT qualifications to support international mobility (drawing, for example, on experience with the *Washington Accord*)
- explore the value of greater alignment of occupational frameworks internationally for different purposes (with different customers, as indicated)

IFIP was well represented by representatives from WG 3.4 (Professional and Vocational Education in IT). The event was also supported by BCS, CEPIS, CompTIA, Intellect-UK, SEARCC and Birkbeck University of London in co-operation with ACM, CIPS and IEEE-CS.

The event raised the profile of IFIP outside the academic and research community by demonstrating our interest in the competence of IT workers around the world. The interest created suggests that there is potential for more work and further meetings but the GLITS organizing committee has indicated that any further events would require a new initiative.

The Organisers would like to thank the BCS for providing the secretariat for the event as well as paying for the brochure.

The event aimed to cover its costs and is expected to provide a small surplus to IFIP after all expenses have been paid, including the IFIP delegate fee.

Roger Johnson  
Conference Chairman  
February 10<sup>th</sup> 2003

IFIP OECD WITSA

Joint Working Conference

**“Meeting Global IT Skills Needs – the Role of  
Professionalism”**

October 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> 2002

Gorse Hill Executive Centre  
Woking, Surrey  
United Kingdom

**PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT**

[www.GlobalITSkills.org](http://www.GlobalITSkills.org)

**“Doing something about the Wild West”:  
expert conference on *Global IT Skills* tackles the international need for greater professionalism”**

The international dimensions of the IT skills issue need to be given more serious consideration, as each country works to tackle the shortages of professional skills in this key strategic area.

This was the underlying conclusion of some 35 experts on IT Skills and Professionalism from 14 countries, who met for a working conference at Gorse Hill, Woking, UK at the end of 2002. The conference was sponsored by IFIP, OECD, WITSA, supported by BCS, CEPIS, CompTIA, Intellect, Birkbeck University of London and SEARCC and in cooperation with ACM, CIPS and IEEE-CS (summary descriptions of the sponsoring bodies are attached).

While each country takes steps to tackle shortages in its national labour market, the increasing globalisation of the IT industry results in growing interdependence of these markets. In particular:

- many large IT companies have a workforce spread across a number of countries, and
- increased mobility of labour results in both increases in supply in countries with higher remuneration for these skills and losses of such skills from some others.

The recruitment process therefore increasingly needs to take account of qualifications and experience gained in other countries. In a field characterized by a remarkable rate of change of tools, techniques and occupational structure, it is understandable that there is considerable variation between countries in the types and curricula of education courses, and even of the frameworks used to describe the functions and roles of IT professional work.

Preliminary analysis before the Conference documented the existence of at least six separate occupational frameworks:

- National Workforce Center for Emerging Technologies (IT Skill Standards) (USA)
- Software HR Council (Occupational Skills Profile Model) (Canada)
- Career-Space (Generic ICT Skills Profiles) (European ICT Industry Consortium)

- British Computer Society (Industry Structure Model) (UK)
- “e-Skills UK” (Skills Framework for the Information Age) (UK), and
- South East Asia Regional Computer Confederation (Regional Survey framework) (S.E. Asia)

and others have subsequently been reported.

While there are inevitably certain similarities between these approaches (and the two UK frameworks are kept “in sync.”) the absence of a common international understanding of what the IT occupations in the marketplace actually are will pose increasing challenges, both for international comparisons and migration statistics and for clarity of recruitment activity and skills issues generally around the world.

But the main focus of the Conference, in addition to tackling the continuing need to improve alignment of education and training provision to employer need, was on clarification of the meaning of **professional** and **professionalism** in relation to such work and skills. It was clear that the very strong growth of the industry over its first few decades had significantly overloaded the capacity of education and training provision systems to provide an adequate supply of people with the relevant skills, and that this had resulted in an element of the “Wild West” prevailing in the labour market for IT practitioners! While computer societies and others had attempted to specify professional standards for IT practitioner work, the acute under-supply had prevented the widespread adoption of these that had been possible for the more “traditional” professions – medicine, the law, etc. - and indeed even in the more established engineering disciplines like Civil Engineering.

It was not clear to Conference participants that this situation could easily (or perhaps ever!) be reversed, but it was accepted that the first step would be to work for international agreement – involving industry, government and education and training providers - on what the principles of professionalism in IT work should be.

Through a relatively broad-brush examination of the field (a number of disciplinary boundaries were bridged in WorkGroup discussions), the Conference was able to provide new insights for many participants, and – while the amount of attention that can be devoted beyond the heavy existing agendas of the individual sponsoring bodies is understandably limited – there was agreement to follow-through in a number of areas. Among the specific steps felt desirable by the international experts were to:

- develop a high level reference model covering groups including IT professionals, IT practitioners and others:
  - to identify the differences in obligations associated with different types of work;
  - to assist the closer matching of employer requirements with educational provision
- develop an inventory of IT professional registration arrangements in support of inter-national mobility;
- explore options for extending international equivalencing of IT qualifications to support international mobility (drawing, for example, on experience with the *Washington Accord*); and
- explore the value of greater alignment of occupational frameworks internationally for different purposes (with different customers)

Copies of the Summary Proceedings of the Conference and the comprehensive background paper (© IFIP 2002) are available from the IFIP Secretariat. For more information, contact Dr. Roger Johnson, Hon Sec IFIP on +44 (0) 20 7631 6709.