

CERTIDOC : the european system of certification of competencies for librarians and information professionals

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AIM

Competency will definitely be in the future the main asset of information professionals for finding a job. It is the condition for them to survive and to enter into competition with the offer of Google. Information will be more and more essential for everybody, but it is up to anybody to choose the carrier or the device he/she wants for accessing the useful information. Users need information “professionals”, people who really know the work they are doing and are able to effectively provide a value added service.

Competency is not merely knowledge, which may be acquired from school or university. It is a combination of knowledge, of know-how and of aptitudes. The day to day working of the professional calls out several diverse skills : selecting information sources, processing documents, abstracting, using traditional or innovative technologies, communicating, ensuring quality of products, etc.

Furthermore there is not a unique type of “information professional”. The profession has diversified into profiles such as public librarian, specialized librarian, documentalist, information officer, records manager, knowledge manager, and many others.

It is necessary in the market place to identify the competencies and to evaluate their level. The professionals need to have a “label” which makes them trustworthy for their employer or the final user. To justify this necessary confidence a diploma may not be enough if obtained ten or twenty years ago, before the emergence of digital documents and of Internet. For that reason most professionals follow training sessions and/or acquire new skills by practising their office, developing some tools or assuming a responsibility in a team or a project. All that contributes to develop competency. For some professionals it may be useful to have validated their new level of competency.

RESULTS

Several professional associations in European countries, willing to promote the profession and to improve the competencies of people who exercise it, have taken into consideration that state of affairs and decided to join their efforts. The results of their cooperation have been so far two tools, necessary to evaluate and recognize the competencies :

- The “Euroguide LIS, Competencies and aptitudes for European information professionals” (2nd Ed., 2004), translated and published in 11 languages. It identifies and defines 33 fields of competencies, differentiating in each one four different levels, which are explained by way of examples of activities. A 3rd Edition is being elaborated to be published in 2009 ;
- The European System of Certification of Information Professionals, currently called CERTIDoc, drawn up in 2003-2004 with the support of the European Commission (Leonardo program), operational since 2005. Four associations (ADBS in France, DGI

in Germany, CERTIDOC-Italia and SEDIC in Spain) are now members of the CERTIDoc Consortium ; three other associations (ABD/BVD in Belgium, ABIDOR in Rumania and the Swiss Committee of certification) benefit from the system by the way of partnership agreements with one from the members of the Consortium. Other associations are working toward the implementation of CERTIDoc in their country or on a sectorial basis.

Already several professionals, in various countries, are proud to have obtained this European certification and work in public as well as in private organizations.

TheEurocertification is regulated in accordance with the international standard ISO/CEI 17024 : 2003. It may be thought of as a complementary or parallel device to the accreditation of teaching institutions or diplomas, as they intend to meet the same need : to give to the society an assurance of the competency of some people. But they do that in different frameworks. Certification is only meant for people who have already practised one branch of the profession during at least three years ; their previous academic or professional training is taken into consideration, but no more than the assets from lifelong learning or nonformal learning. The certificate is not a diploma but rather a label.

Professionals who have been certified give an assurance that they possess, at a given level, the competencies needed to carry out the tasks incumbent to their profession and to perform their professional duties in a satisfactory way. Certification of competencies furthers professional development. It is accessory to career development as well as a secure and reliable way to evaluate one's personal competencies. It may foster professional or geographical mobility. It may be recognized within the hierarchy of a company.

METHODS

For granting the certificate, the competencies of candidates are assessed by reference to each of the 33 fields of expertise of the Euroguide LIS. Candidates have to make up a portfolio with evidences of their skill in each of the fields, mainly products of their own work : reports, projects, articles, documentary products, technical tols, etc., and testimonials from employer, tutor, director, etc.A jury made of three assessors scrutinizes the portfolio, then interviews the candidate. Rules and procedures are published in various languages and are available on the web site www.certidoc.net

CONCLUSIONS

The CERTIDoc device is a strategic component not only to promote individuals, but also by the same token the whole profession.

In March 2008 the ADBS has submitted to the European Commission a new proposal in the frame of the Leonardo program, entitled : COMPETIDOC. Its aim is to develop and promote these two existing tools (the Euroguide LIS and the CERTIDoc procedures) specially in the countries of Central Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia) because in these countries the need to assess and improve the level of professional competencies is strongly felt.

REFERENCES

<http://www.certidoc.net>