

ITU Centres of Excellence

An expanding network worldwide

Seven ITU Centres of Excellence (CoE), established worldwide through a project launched in 1997, are helping train public- and private-sector managers and decision-makers in telecommunication policy, regulation and management, and keep them up-to-date with technological advances. The CoE network spans the globe, offering training opportunities in the Arab, Americas, Africa, and Asia-Pacific regions, as well as Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

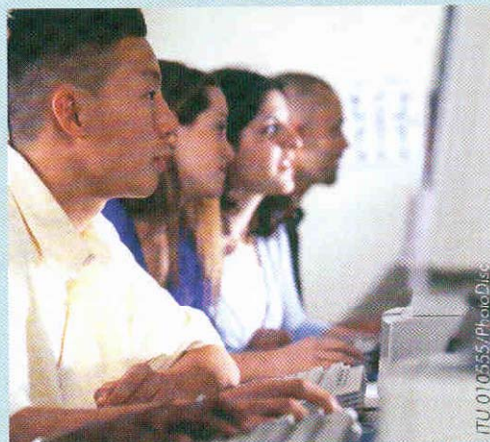
Workshops are provided that participants attend for a number of days, but increasingly, this method of training is being combined with the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to deliver online courses and virtual forums. By June 2005, some 10 735 top-level professionals had participated in courses since training began in 1999. In 2004 alone, the seven CoEs provided a total of 94 different programmes for 4145 top-level telecommunication professionals — and 5000 more are likely to be trained during 2005.

Africa

Africa has two CoEs. One is for the English-speaking countries, and is coordinated in Nairobi (Kenya) by ITU in partnership with the African Advanced Level Telecommunications Institute (AFRALTI). The other is the *Ecole Supérieure Multinationale des Télécommunications* (ESMT), based in Dakar (Senegal), and serving French-speaking countries. These pioneer centres have demonstrated the role that can be played by a regional training provider in supporting the liberalization process. While addressing diverse training needs, they have provided unique opportunities to share best practices and establish useful benchmarks. Together, the two African CoEs have organized training for a total of 2658 participants over five years.

AFRALTI is now being expanded into West Africa through a new partnership with the Ghana Telecom Training College (GTTC). Under the terms of a

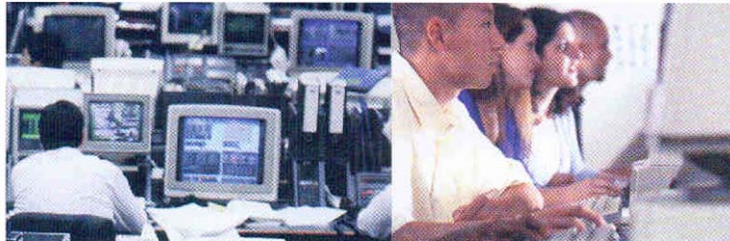
Memorandum of Understanding signed on 30 June 2005 in Accra, GTTC and AFRALTI will produce and implement joint training programmes; exchange information and experience, including best practices; share human resources, and undertake collaborative research and consultancy services. This initiative will reinforce a networking process that began in early 2004 when TDM (Mozambique) signed an agreement on hosting AFRALTI programmes.



More than 1000 middle managers follow online courses on ICT and telecommunication each year, delivered through ITU CoEs worldwide

Latin America

Also a pioneer in the CoE network, Latin America focuses on distance learning. Unlike attending workshops, this method of study requires only a few hours a week — which decision-makers can more easily fit into their busy schedules. However, most participants in the CoE courses also like to include several face-to-face sessions, as a means of consolidating what they have studied online. Over five years, 2499 professionals have trained through the CoE for Latin America. In February 2005, the CoE Coordination Unit was transferred from Cordoba (Argentina) to Tegucigalpa (Honduras).



Arab States

The Arab CoE stresses the need to respond to participants' real interests. It has successfully tried the idea of making the first workshop of each yearly programme a "launching" session so participants can have a say in the topics that should be given priority in later workshops. In just over three-and-a-half years of operation, the CoE has trained 3570 participants. In May 2005, the CoE's Coordination Unit was transferred from Damascus in the Syrian Arab Republic to Muscat, Oman.



Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific CoE is based upon an online portal that simultaneously supports distance-learning resources and stand-alone training packages, while providing indispensable information on hot issues such as e-commerce, broadcasting, Internet protocol telephony, interconnection, and service pricing. In the last three years, the CoE has organized 16 sessions, attended by 386 participants.

Activities planned for 2006 include pilot workshops on rural connectivity and regulatory issues.

Europe and CIS

The CoE for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States has two branches: one offering programmes in English, and the other in Russian. The centre compiles yearly action plans, and over two years, the English-speaking branch has organized training for 630 participants, while the Russian-speaking branch has trained 664 senior personnel. In April 2005, the CoE Coordination Unit of the CIS branch moved from Moscow to Kyiv (Ukraine). The European branch Unit was transferred from Zilina (Slovakia) to Sofia (Bulgaria).

Partnership and sustainability

The Centres of Excellence were created thanks to the allocation of CHF 9 million in "seed money" from the excess of income over expenditure arising from the ITU TELECOM events. The short- and long-term sustainability of a development project is a key factor in ITU's deciding to undertake it. In this respect, the Americas, African, and Arab CoEs in particular have achieved remarkable results, delivering dozens of cost-effective training activities and contributing a steadily growing amount to their yearly budgets. This kind of performance is also supported by major contributions from other public-sector agencies and the private sector — and the successes attract further assistance.

Canada's International Institute of Telecommunications (IIT), for example, signed a partnership agreement at the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003. Since then, IIT has organized innovative courses as part of the TAP on TELECOM Project. This multi-phase initiative, which is supported by Industry Canada, aims to create a system for building up capacity in Africa and the Arab States among professionals who deal with advanced technical issues.

Another CoE partner is the *Institut National des Télécommunications*, of France, which has contributed to ongoing CoE activities such as the Simobiz Project. This delivers five-day regional workshops at which participants simulate a national mobile phone market, enabling them to learn through taking strategic, marketing, network planning, staffing and financial decisions in their role-playing as mobile service operators.

Other key partners are the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL) and CISCO, of the United States, who provide financial support for the delivery of CoE products in the Americas. Funding from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Nortel Networks and Spectrocan, has made possible the consolidation of major CoE programmes in Africa. France's Alcatel has provided similar support worldwide for the development of the Technology Awareness programme in most of the CoEs, while in the Arab region, TRA (Oman), Saudi Telecom, Sudatel (Sudan) and EGTI (Egypt) have made significant financial contributions. ■