

CSIR to participate in World Conference on Computers in Education

South Africa hosts the eighth World Conference on Computers (WCCE) in Stellenbosch from 4 to 7 July 2005. The conference, which takes place every four years, aims to explore the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in education and teaching of informatics.

The opening session of the conference on 4 July includes an address by Mohamed Enver Surty, Deputy Minister of Education.

The Open Source Centre of the CSIR's Meraka Institute will exhibit and present with partners in the Open Source Coalition and the University of the Western Cape (UWC) as part of the attractions at the ICOOL. ICOOL 2005 is the second International Conference on Open and Online Learning organised by the University of Mauritius in the context of WCCE 2005.

The Open Source Centre and its partners will also facilitate workshops and participate in seminars at WCCE 2005 (<http://www.sbs.co.za/wcce2005/>).

Kim Tucker of the Open Source Centre says: The combined events at WCCE 2005 offer a unique networking opportunity for researchers, educators and policymakers from around the world on advancing research into ICTs in education.

Using free and open source software in education will enable people to achieve more in the ICT field in the long term. Free/Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS), as opposed to proprietary software, does not limit peoples access, discovery and invention potential. It allows them to share knowledge freely, which nurtures a culture of CSIR to participate in World Conference on Computers in Education collaboration, says Tucker.

The participation of the Open Source Centre and collaborators in the WCCE/ICOOL 2005 will include a pre-release of Education-out-of-the-Box (a sampler of Open Education Resources), a presentation on FLOSS and Creative Commons Licensing Challenges in Africa by Joris Komen of Schoolnet Namibia, and a workshop on Free Knowledge Communities.

Schoolnet Namibia, with the support of the Open Source Initiative of South Africa (OSISA) and the UWC, will also co-demonstrate the KewlNextGen (visit <http://avoir.uwc.ac.za/>) - an Africa open source project for e-learning - and TuxLabs (visit <http://www.tuxlabs.org.za>).

The CSIR continues to strengthen its role as one of Africas leading innovative, research and development institutions. It has partnered with the UWC in a FLOSS project, funded by the European Union's 6th Framework Research Programme.

The Meraka Institute, housed on the CSIR site in Pretoria, focuses on developing people and knowledge applications in the ICT arena. The Institute will play a pivotal

role in equipping people with world-class ICT skills while partnering with South African higher education institutions to focus on needs-based research programmes.