

New research confirms ICDL's ability to boost national economies by delivering essential IT skills to citizens

Research drives ICDL to expand and strengthen its presence in the region

April 6, 2004

International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL), the internationally recognised computer proficiency standard, has received a shot in the arm with a new study that reveals that the program can boost national economies by delivering essential IT skills to citizens. The study, carried out in Ireland, the founding country of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) Foundation, revealed that the Irish economy has benefited to the value of 362 million Euros and the creation of 4,400 jobs since the ICDL program was introduced in 1997.

The widespread adoption of the ICDL program has become a vital component of the nation's drive to increase job opportunities and to boost the business environment. The success story of ICDL is not however, confined to Ireland. ICDL has been adopted in over 135 countries globally and its programs have been translated into 34 languages, including Arabic. Over 3.75 million people are undertaking an ICDL certification globally. It has been endorsed by hundreds of major corporations and governments as the standard for computer education.

The success stories in the Western world have far-reaching consequences for the Gulf and the Middle East, as ICDL has already established its presence in many countries in the region. ICDL has set up quality training and testing centres throughout the region and has also partnered with major training and academic institutions, as well as governmental organizations to spread the penetration of ICDL programs.

"As the world's most widely accredited international computer proficiency certification, ICDL provides a practical, flexible and cost-effective means of learning, testing and certifying the basic computer skills required in everyday professional and personal use of computers," said Rich MacLaren, Program Director, ICDL UAE. "With the Middle East poised to register phenomenal growth in IT, ICDL has a major role to play in the region."

According to the Irish study, more than 250,000 Irish people have participated in an ICDL program to date and over 6 per cent of the Irish population is now ICDL qualified. Both governments and businesses are aggressively promoting the ICDL certification as a channel for career advancement and generation of jobs.

Since its launch in the Middle East in 2001, the ICDL program has been endorsed by the governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, UAE, Egypt and Jordan. In Egypt, the ICDL program is endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of ICT and e-Government. The Jordanian Government has directed all Federal employees to complete the ICDL Certification program by 2006. The program has already been endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of ICT and e-Government. Individual ministries or departments in Kuwait, Oman, UAE and Saudi Arabia have recommended it to their employees and teachers.

In Saudi Arabia, there has been a lot of interest in the program from Government sectors such as the General Organisation of Technical Education and Vocational Training (GOTEVOT) as well as King Fahad University for Petroleum and Minerals and King Khalid University. GOTEVOT has already adopted the ICDL program as a requirement for all of its students. More than 10,000 students have been trained to date, with a vast amount of students currently being trained and tested

Oman's Ministry of National Economy is leading a national effort and has recently endorsed the ICDL program and currently working with other Ministries in the Sultanate to implement the program. The Ministry will recommend the implementation of the ICDL program for the entire Omani government workforce, and work closely with the Ministry of Education to ensure that all teachers are ICDL certified and all secondary level students complete the program.

In the UAE, Dubai eGovernment has implemented two ICDL programs as part of its e4all initiative and the basic ICDL program will be offered to all qualifying government employees in Dubai. Dubai e-Government has also launched the e-Citizen program developed by the ECDL Foundation, aimed at educating Dubai residents on how to use Dubai eGovernment e-Services. The Abu Dhabi Education Zone and the Abu Dhabi Water & Electricity

In the news

Authority have chosen the ICDL program for 7,000 school teachers and 10,000 employees respectively. The ICDL certification program has also been endorsed as an acceptable standard for basic computer skills by all the major universities in the UAE and training is currently being offered to their teachers and students.

In the Middle East, ICDL is sponsored by UNESCO's Cairo Office (UCO) for Arab states, and is gaining increasing acceptance, with several governments adopting or prescribing it to their employees.

"ICDL was first introduced in Europe because of the need to address the shortage of manpower trained in Information Technology," said David Carpenter, Managing Director, European Computer Driving Licence Foundation. "Within a short period, ICDL succeeded in establishing its credentials and won recognition as the global standard for acquiring basic and advanced computer skills."

"ICDL programs such as 'equal skills' and 'e-citizen' are used across the globe to impart high-standard focused IT skills that are essential in the work environment and social environment today," added Carpenter. "Having proved its capabilities, ICDL is now set to enter new markets to offer emerging nations IT tools that have helped many nations to provide computer skills to their citizens."

"The ICDL program enables governments to achieve their socio-economic aims by equipping citizens with new IT skills thus preparing them for an IT-driven environment. As a result, people get better career opportunities and promotions within their current positions," Carpenter said.

About ICDL

International Computer Driving License (ICDL), is an internationally recognized computer proficiency standard that is owned by the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) and introduced by the UNESCO's Cairo Office (UCO) for Arab states in 2001. ICDL is gaining increasing acceptance in the Middle East, with several governments adopting as a requirement to their employees. The ICDL program exists in over 132 countries, and is offered in 32 languages, including Arabic. The programs offered are all based on one standard syllabus and question set. There are more than 15,000 centres worldwide, and over 10 million exams have been taken globally since the launch of the program.

About ICDL GCC Foundation

ICDL GCC Foundation was created by the ECDL Foundation, the not-for-profit global governing body of the ECDL and ICDL member countries dedicated to helping raise the general level of computer skills in societies and providing access for all to the information society, to serve the to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States with their implementation of ICDL and for providing them with localised support to ensure quality of ICDL programs. The ICDL-GCC Foundation is the sole ICDL licensee and accreditation body that is responsible to support ICDL accredited training and testing centres in the GCC. It also acts as the reviewing and approving body for the local adaptation of ICDL programs, including authorizing the sale of Arabic ICDL content and testing material in the region.

For further information contact:

Orient Planet PR and Marketing Communications
P O Box 23345, Dubai, UAE.
Tel: 00 971 4 3988901; Fax: 00 971 4 3988941
Email: info@orientplanet.com
Website: www.orientplanet.com