ICDL strengthens its regional presence with the creation of ICDL GCC Foundation

Jamil Ezzo says ICDL is key to economic growth and assures making the program available to all

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The European Computer Driving License Foundation (ECDL-F), the non-profit global governing body of the ECDL and ICDL member countries, dedicated to helping raise the general level of computer skills, has announced the formation of the ICDL GCC Foundation. The Foundation will be responsible for providing localised support to ICDL accredited training and testing centres within the six GCC States and conduct quality regulation of the program. The announcement was made recently by David Carpenter, Director and CEO of the ECDL Foundation, Ireland.

Mr. Carpenter, who visited the Middle East last month, also announced the appointment of Jamil Ezzo, as Director General of the ICDL GCC Foundation. During his visit, Mr Carpenter met with several key policymakers and government officials and discussed the progress made in the implementation of the ICDL programme in the region.

Mr. Carpenter said: "We are pleased to announce the creation of the ICDL GCC Foundation and the appointment of Mr. Ezzo, a seasoned professional with extensive regional experience, to manage the new regional office. With growing cooperation among the GCC countries, our presence in the region gives us the opportunity to share ICDL's experiences and best practices from around the world in the adoption of the ICDL program among the six GCC countries. Key government officials and policymakers from each of the six GCC Countries will be sitting on the Board of the ICDL GCC Foundation so that we are directly aware of the requirements of government bodies, the education sector, and businesses in the respective countries."

"With over 3.5 million ECDL/ICDL participants worldwide, we foresee the Gulf region to develop into a major contributor in the further growth of the program in the coming months and years," said Mr. Carpenter. "We are delighted that Mr. Ezzo has decided to steer the ICDL GCC Foundation and we are thrilled to have someone with his experience and knowledge heading our regional presence."

Jamil Ezzo brings more than 20 years of experience in the technology and training industries, his most recent posting being General Manager of Element K Middle East, an international provider of e-learning solutions. Prior to his coming to the region seven years ago to join Sakhr Software as their Director of International Marketing, Mr. Ezzo held various executive and senior management positions in the United States with Knowlogy Corporation, Advance Learning Labs and Profit Technology.

"It is, indeed, a great honour for me to take up this task of directing the ICDL GCC Foundation," said Mr. Ezzo. "The ICDL program has proved to be a highly successful form of spreading computer literacy among citizens around the world. We look forward to making the ICDL program available to the over 35 million people in the GCC. We realize the key to the success of our computer literacy program is our vendor-neutrality and our partnership with the governments in the region to make ICDL part of the education system and government training programs for employees and citizens."

Building on the pioneering role of the UNESCO-Cairo Office in the introduction and support of the ICDL programme in the Arab region, and the overwhelming success achieved by the ICDL certification program in the Arab Gulf countries, the ICDL GCC Foundation will synergise the efforts of the ECDL Foundation in the overall implementation of the ICDL program in the region.

The formation of the ICDL GCC Foundation not only reflects on ECDL's commitment to the region, but also on its goal to achieve horizontal growth for the program, which will focus on introducing additional ICDL certification and specialization programmes such as ICDL for Kids, ICDL for Teachers, Advanced ICDL among others, designed to cater to people regardless of their background, while factoring in the specific needs of the region.

A recent study carried out in Ireland revealed that the Irish economy has benefited to the value of € 362 million and the creation of 4,400 jobs since the ICDL program was introduced in 1997. ECDL with the establishment of the

ICDL GCC Foundation is working with the key decision makers in the region to take the benefits of ICDL certification to the masses and make it the central pillar in their national education agenda.

"Citizens participating in the ICDL program in the region can benefit from the lowest prices compared to the rest of the world. Our commitment is to ensure that the ICDL programme remains affordable for everyone in the region. In partnership with our approved training content and official test providers, we will ensure that cost levels are maintained and that pricing policies in the GCC are consistent and continue to be within means to everyone. We are also committed to ensuring that quality levels of the programme are maintained in line with the standards laid down by the ECDL Foundation," added Ezzo.

Since its launch in the Middle East by UNESCO - Cairo Office in 2001, ICDL is being offered by quality training and testing centres across the GCC and has also been adopted by major training and academic institutions, as well as governmental organisations. ECDL/ICDL is the world's largest vendor-neutral end-user computer skills certification and is internationally recognized as the global benchmark in computer literacy. ECDL/ICDL is currently available in 135 countries and has been translated in 32 languages, including Arabic, making it the world's leading and largest certification programme.

The ICDL Foundation has a two-point strategy of assuring quality control while maintaining affordability of the programme to all. ICDL's pricing is based on extensive research conducted by UNESCO. The ICDL GCC Foundation will also supervise localisation of the programme content to match the specific requirements of learners in the Arab World.

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.

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