

ECDL for Young Cancer Patients – Austria

Background to the Project

The project 'ECDL for Young Cancer Patients' is a co-operation between: the Austrian Childhood Cancer Organisation; various hospitals; the Austrian Computer Society (OCG); and the consultancy group 'die Berater@', and it is supported by numerous companies and organisations.

The project gives children and young people who suffer from cancer the opportunity to attain ECDL certification. Its aim is to benefit the recovery process by providing new experiences, and a sense of achievement outside everyday life with the disease. The project was launched in January 2002 at the St. Anna Kinderspital in Vienna, and is now run successfully in all Austrian federal provinces.

The main aim of the ECDL project for young cancer patients is to influence the recovery process positively. Patients' occupation with a concrete topic, contact with people outside the hospital and family environment, studying together, and having a sense of achievement at the exams all lead to positive results, and make experiences possible which are not related to the disease, or to the clinic routine. Additionally, the project also helps to develop an optimistic view on a (professional) 'after-life'.

Flexibility at all levels - Learning According to Individual Needs

An introductory session is held with all participants (on average between 10 and 19 years of age) before starting the ECDL programme to present the project, and to answer any questions that potential candidates might have. After that, the participants individually choose the preferred topics they want to start with and receive the necessary learning CDs and papers from their trainers. The patients then work as regularly as possible in the hospital, the premises of the Austrian Childhood Cancer Organisation, or at home – depending on their condition and treatment phase. When the young patients are in hospital they work in group workshops or directly at the hospital bed.

“Here a dual-learning system, the so-called ‘blended learning’ system, is employed. The participants work independently with their learning material, learning from CD-ROM or performing tasks. At regular intervals, however, specially trained trainers of the project come and study with them. The participants determine their learning pace on their own”, explains Stefan Kremser of the consultancy group, 'die Berater@'.



A participant with laptop in the hospital bed



Training at a participant's home



Group training in the Austrian Childhood Cancer Organisation Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland

Since 2010, online training has also become possible. It was brought about by a boy suffering from cancer who had been at St. Anna Kinderspital for treatment, and who then returned home to the Ukraine before he could finish his training. Using video and a headset, the boy managed to finish the rest of the course successfully online. The technology for online testing is supplied by the Austrian Computer Society (OCG).

The Austrian Computer Society (OCG) has provided further flexibility with the special permission for trainers to hold exams both at the hospital bed and at home.

'Multipliers' – Training of Additional Caregivers Extends the Delivery of ECDL

In each Austrian province so-called 'multipliers' are trained. These are mostly people who work directly at the hospital, or who constantly deal with the children and young patients. First of all, these multipliers must have finished the entire ECDL course, including the tests, to be able to support the participants with the obtained competencies in the best possible way. Moreover, they receive all necessary information on the learning material and the current state of the project from the trainers of the project. In principle, at least two multipliers are trained for each Austrian province.



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First certificate award ceremony in June 2002 in Vienna



First ECDL graduate from Carinthia

High Quality Standards for Trainers

The selection of trainers for this project follows strict guidelines:

“Apart from the fundamental professional qualification (i.e. all trainers are accredited ECDL examiners), psychologists from the Austrian Childhood Cancer Organisation and the hospitals interview the future trainers to make sure that they have high social and pedagogic qualifications and assess their soft skills”, stresses Eugen Mühlvenzel, OCG General Secretary. Regular team meetings and supervision are essential elements of the project. To guarantee the high quality standards, the ongoing training courses are discussed in regular meetings and discussions with psychologists of the Austrian Childhood Cancer Organisations, and of course with the participants.



ECDL in Numbers – A Real Success Story

From 2002 (when the project started at the St. Anna Kinderspital in Vienna) to January 2011, about 370 participants have started the project in locations all over Austria. Of them: 99 children and young patients have received their ECDL certificate (i.e. all 7 modules passed); 19 participants have passed ECDL Advanced; two ECDL ImageMaker, two ECDL Module 3 - Word Processing, and two ECDL WebStarter. So far more than 1,000 individual exams have been taken.

It is not only the creativity and flexibility of the participants that has been constantly challenged, but also that of those responsible for the project. For example, all those involved

have met the wish of a participant to organise a web design course for other young cancer patients. To realise his aim, he was supported by an experienced trainer.

Award Ceremony of ECDL Certificates at the OCG Annual Meeting

“This project has, at many levels, a positive influence on the children and young people as well as on their social environment, brothers and sisters, parents and friends. Talking about a topic not related to their disease, and the forming of peer groups, personal contacts and communication via the Internet have been positively received”, Anita Kienesberger, CEO of the Austrian Childhood Cancer Organisation, is convinced. Not least, the participants in hospital are given a sense of normality by preparing for their ECDL tests. The participants can obtain a positive sense of achievement when they pass the ECDL tests successfully, and thus earn the certificate.

A special highlight for all those involved is the official award ceremony of the ECDL certificates organised annually by the Austrian Computer Society (OCG).



Certificate award ceremony May 2008 with Austrian Federal Minister Andrea Kdolsky



Certificate award ceremony 2009 in Vienna



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Certificate award ceremony 2010

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