



EUROPEAN COMPUTER DRIVING LICENCE

Bits & Bytes

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The first ECDL Diplomas at the Ministry of Labour in Portugal were distributed on March 6th at a Ceremony chaired by the Secretary of State for Social Security, Dr. Simões de Almeida. The Secretary of State emphasised their commitment to the increase of IT competencies of civil servants and in particular those at the Ministry of Labour, and the importance of the ECDL as a means to achieve that aim.

Amalgamated Beverage Industries, the bottlers of Coca Cola in much of South Africa, have announced Project "Ukufunda", an initiative to provide basic computer literacy for staff - in the form of ICDL certification. In addition to the basic aim of upliftment, ABI are also seeing this project as an opportunity to improve productivity. Deon Botha, Business Development Director at CS Education Solutions says: "73% of ABI's staff have only rudimentary computer skills. This project will certainly allow ABI to up-skill those individuals, increasing their productivity. The recent SAP implementation at ABI has made these skills even more critical."

Sofia Lindstrom received her ECDL certification in Sweden earlier this year and by achieving this she qualified for and landed her dream job as an IT administrator at an exclusive English boarding school.

Datakortet who administers ECDL in Norway has signed a contract with Sparbanken in north Norway. All employees will complete the ECDL course during 2002 and 2003. The bank has chosen ECDL as a way to increase the general level of IT competence. All the 1000 employees at Sparbanken in north Norway will now get the chance to test their IT skills. They will also get the opportunity to be ECDL certified based on their existing skills & knowledge. "Our target is that each employee should understand their own PC and take full advantage of the software they are using", says Hans Olav Gjøvik at Sparbanken. "We regard it as a part of our overall strategy to implement ECDL. The employee will be satisfied and do a better job as well as fulfilling the market's need for knowledge and quality" Gjøvik ends.

Over 50,000 European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) students in the Netherlands undertook their tests in 2001. That's an increase of more than a 100% over the previous year. This strong growth has carried over into 2002 with over 14,000 new student registrations in the first two months. The internationally recognised ECDL qualification that certifies essential computer skills and knowledge is achieving strong acceptance in the Netherlands at all levels of society. Interest from the corporate market in particular is growing rapidly. More and more organisations see the European Computer Driving Licence as the IT literacy standard for their staff. They follow the example of international organisations such as Siemens, Tetrapak and Volvo who have all experienced benefits from adopting ECDL for their staff.

The RAF is to roll out ten new learndirect centres at air bases across the UK this April, offering staff 24-hour online training. The move follows a trial at three RAF bases, which saw more than 1300 people sign up for courses. *"About 80 per cent of the courses are to do with IT, mainly ECDL courses, but other subjects are also covered, like web design,"* explains Squadron Leader David Curwen of the RAF's learning implementation team.

Following this success ECDL UK has recently announced the launch of a further level of testing, ECDL Advanced. Like the ECDL, the new qualification also takes a modular form, although each module is a qualification in its own right as it covers a specific skills set. The first to become available are Advanced Word Processing and Advanced Spreadsheets. ECDL Advanced is designed for candidates who want further recognition of their skills, in order to progress their careers, to make the most of their computers or just to validate their knowledge. The qualification will test the skills required in specific roles such as accountancy, secretarial, help desks or IT support desks.

In France, the European Computer Driving Licence has just received the official support of the Ministry in charge of Commerce & Industry. This support is the outcome of a positive collaboration which includes the obtaining in 1999 of financing from the DIGITIP (Head office of the Industry, the Technology of Information and Posts), and the implementation of the ECDL in more than 44 Chambers of Commerce & Industry and 25 Business schools.

ECDL Hungary held its annual meeting on the 22nd of February 2002. This year it attracted more than 200 participants from 189 test centres.

The Greater London Authority is currently considering the adoption of the European Computer Driving Licence as the standard for basic IT skills across the city. The E-London report published by the Authority last year with the aim of maintaining London's position as the e-capital of Europe, points to the benefits of implementing a standard IT qualification which is consistent with qualifications elsewhere in Europe.

The South African Tongaat-Hulett Group has embarked on an e-learning initiative across its five divisions through the ICDL. This is part of a drive to empower employees with computer competency skills. Through the ICDL programme, the group plans to train more than 1000 employees in a two-year Tongaat-Hulett Sugar, African Products, Moreland Estates, Hulett Aluminum and the group head office

Attending the meeting was Mr Péter Szemerei from the Prime Minister's office. In his speech he stated that the government supports and recognizes ECDL and that it is the best vendor independent international standard for computer literacy.

The Bermuda College through the Computer Society of Bermuda has brought the International Computer Drivers License (ICDL) to Bermuda. The ICDL sets a benchmark to a worldwide standard that the holder has some computer competency in several major areas. The Computer Society will be working with the college, and local vendors to provide training and certification of the ICDL program. Businesses will benefit by knowing that holders of the ICDL have a standard level of competency in wide range of computer skills.

On December 27, 2001, the Egyptian Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Mofied Shehab, and Dr. Mohamed El-Deek, Director of the UNESCO Cairo Office (UCO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) aimed at advancing the basic IT and computer skills and knowledge of the Egyptian Higher Education Community through the endorsement of the ICDL certification programme.

A blind student, Oscar Mracha, at Anglia Polytechnic University (APU) in Chelmsford UK has joined the long list of people to make a successful start on their ECDL programme. Oscar, who lost his sight twelve years ago, and who is currently studying for an MA in Corporate Administration at APU thought the ECDL would be an ideal vehicle for him to prove to potential employers that he was computer literate.

"At ARIANE (Training) Services in France we have large numbers of people attending our ECDL training sessions. Many are sent from companies but we also have quite a few job-seekers. Among the job-seekers we have seen an increasing number of disabled persons coming in to do the ECDL. We noticed that achievement of the ECDL certificate produced a greater self-confidence amongst the students. All of them who successfully completed their ECDL managed to use the qualification to help find a first job. The ECDL is an excellent tool for personal development because it confirms a person's IT knowledge and strengthens their practical skill level."

Farming today in Ireland is no longer just about hard work - it is a highly specialised business. Today's farmers must be administrators, businessmen, stockmen, marketers, accountants and much more. Greenmount College is continually monitoring and evaluating its courses and adapting to meet these changing needs of industry. Students studying for the National Diploma in Agriculture cover a range of subjects including Milk Production, Beef Production, Sheep Production, Pig Production, Farm Mechanisation, Animal Health and Business Management. Students are also given the opportunity to complete the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) in the final year of the course.