



NEW STUDY CONFIRMS ‘VERY SIGNIFICANT’ IMPACT OF ECDL IN IRELAND

Ms Mary Hanafin TD, Government Chief Whip and Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach today launched a major new study into the impact of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) in Ireland.

The independent report was commissioned by the European Computer Driving Licence Foundation Ltd. (ECDL-F) and carried out by Dr Susan O’Donnell of Itech Research. It is the most comprehensive study to date on the impact of the ECDL programme in a national market.

The report confirms that since its launch in 1997 the ECDL has generated cumulative benefits to the Irish economy in the order of €362 million.

The ECDL-F was set up just over six years ago with two employees and a small grant from the Irish government. Today its core certification, the ECDL, generates direct and indirect benefits conservatively valued at over €121 million annually to the Irish economy.

The report finds that the ECDL has been hugely successful in economic terms, having generated significant levels of employment, with more than 4,400 people in Ireland currently employed wholly or partly in relation to the provision of the ECDL programme.

The report further determines that the ECDL generates annual productivity savings of €62.3 million to Irish employers.

The report credits the ECDL as being a seminal influence in the building of the IT certification industry and developing the IT training & testing services sector as well as the IT training products sector.

And the overall impact of the ECDL in Ireland has not just been economic. The study concludes that the ECDL has led to a considerable increase in IT skills across the board and made a significant contribution to Irish policy goals in relation to economic and social development in the Information Society.

To date over 250,000 people in Ireland alone (or 6% of the total population) have embarked on ECDL certification and the numbers grow daily.

The study also finds that Irish business has embraced the ECDL. Not only have 92,000 adults in employment embarked on ECDL certification but more than 100 Irish businesses and large corporations have become accredited ECDL Test Centres.

The ECDL is, of course, not just an Irish success story. The programme is available in 135 countries around the world and has been translated into 32 languages. With over 3.75 million people around the world participating in the programme, the ECDL is internationally recognised as the global benchmark for end-user computer skills and is the leading certification to be adopted by governments, international organisations and corporations alike.

Speaking at the launch today David Carpenter, CEO of the European Computer Driving Licence Foundation Ltd. (ECDL-F) said, "The ECDL was created as a result of the vision of CEPIS (Council Of European Informatics Societies) and its members, the European Computer Societies. That early vision was turned into a reality by the work and dedication of the global partnership between the ECDL-F and its Licensees worldwide, in conjunction with many thousands of training and testing service providers. The hugely successful implementation of that early vision has seen the ECDL become the worldwide standard in end-user computer skills certification, as confirmed by the findings of this impact study. The vision and energy that created the ECDL continue to be applied to our ongoing work, as evidenced by the range and diversity of recent product releases, such as equalskills and e-Citizen. This is consistent with the ECDL-F key mission of facilitating access for all to the Information Society."

Chairman of ECDL-F and CEO of ICS Skills, Jim Friars added, "As the Irish Licensee for ECDL, we take pride in the enormous progress that we have made in establishing the ECDL in Ireland. In the six years since its introduction in Ireland, we have seen over 250,000 Candidates (out of an overall population of just under 4 million) participate in the ECDL, firmly establishing the ECDL as the leading end-user computer skills certification in Ireland. The results of this impact study highlight the effectiveness of the ECDL programme in assisting the government to meet major economic and social objectives through upskilling the workforce and bridging the digital divide."

The launch of the research report took place at the official opening of the new ECDL-F global headquarters in Dublin today.

For more information please contact:

Mary Mulcahy
ECDL Foundation Ltd
T: 01 630 6004
E: mary.mulcahy@ecd.com

OR

Karen Fitzpatrick
ignite pr & marketing ltd
T: 01 670 4500
E: ignite@iol.ie

Or log on to the ECDL-F website at www.ecdl.com

About ECDL

With more than 3.75 million participants in 135 countries across the globe, the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) is internationally recognised as the world's leading end-user computer skills certification programme.

Known as the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) in countries outside of Europe, it is the core certification within the ECDL-F range of programmes.

The ECDL/ICDL is internationally recognised as the global benchmark for end-user computer skills and is the leading certification to be adopted by governments, international organisations and corporations alike.

The ECDL/ICDL is a test of practical skills and competencies and consists of seven separate modules covering computer theory and practice. Module 1 is a theoretical test of computing knowledge at a general level and Modules 2-7 are practical skills Tests, as follows:

1. Concepts of Information Technology (IT)
2. Using a Computer and Managing Files
3. Word Processing
4. Spreadsheets
5. Database
6. Presentation
7. Information and Communication

The ECDL/ICDL certifies that the holder is competent in the use of a personal computer and common computer applications and knows the essential concepts of IT.

About the ECDL-F

The European Computer Driving Licence Foundation Ltd. (ECDL-F) is the global governing body and licensing authority for the world's leading end-user computer certification the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence).

The ECDL-F is a not-for-profit organisation with a strong social ethos and a mission to bring computer skills to as wide a spectrum of society as possible.

Based in Dublin, Ireland the ECDL-F was set up in 1997 under the auspices of the European computer societies as a result of a European Commission initiative to raise the level of IT skills in Europe.

From modest beginnings the ECDL-F has grown from a one-product organisation to the world's leading certification provider with a comprehensive suite of end-user computer skills certifications, operating through its Licensee network in more than 70% of the countries on the planet.

Although the ECDL-F competes successfully with a wide range of commercial competitors, the Foundation's goals are not based on profit. The ECDL-F operates on uniquely inclusive principles which seek to provide access for all to the Information Society.

The ECDL-F believes that this access should not only be the preserve of the privileged few and works towards a goal of providing that access to the whole community irrespective of gender, ethnicity, physical ability, age or speciality area.

It is this ethos, coupled with the unrivalled quality of the certification standards, which has led to the unique recognition and respect commanded by the ECDL-F and its range of certification programmes.

The ECDL-F Mission

The following are the aims of the ECDL-F:

- To promote computer literacy
- To raise IT knowledge levels
- To facilitate access to the Information Society
- To facilitate job mobility
- To facilitate re-training
- To improve productivity
- To enhance return on IT investments

For more information on the ECDL-F please log on to www.ecdl.com.

About the ECDL-F Product Range

There are four areas within the ECDL-F range of certification programmes, from entry-level programmes for complete beginners to specialised programmes for expert end-users.

The entire range of ECDL-F certifications are distinguished by the exceptionally high standards applied both to product development and to the ongoing maintenance of the certifications.

In the foundation area of the product range, equalskills is the ECDL-F entry-level certification programme for complete beginners, while the e-Citizen certification caters for improver-Candidates.

The core certification in the Foundation's product range is the ECDL/ICDL, the world's leading end-user computer skills certification programme.

The third area of the ECDL-F product range is the ECDL/ICDL Advanced programme for expert-level ECDL/ICDL Candidates in the areas of Word Processing, Spreadsheets, Database and Presentations.

The fourth area of the ECDL-F range is ECDL/ICDL Specialised which, as the name suggests, caters for specialised areas of expertise. The first programme in this area of the range is ECDL/ICDL for Computer Aided Design (ECDL/ICDL CAD), the first independent global standard for core skills in 2-dimensional (2D) computer aided design. In addition to ECDL/ICDL CAD there are new certifications in development in the areas of Multimedia, Web Publishing and Image Processing.

Supporting all of these certifications is our only non end-user certification, ECDL/ICDL Certified Training Professional (ECDL/ICDL CTP) for ECDL/ICDL trainers.

As an organisation committed to providing access for all to the Information Society the ECDL-F takes pride in the breadth and depth of its range of certifications. The ECDL-F constantly strives to provide the best certifications for the widest spectrum in society possible thereby offering access for all to the Information Society.

About ICS Skills

ICS SKILLS is the skills and certification division of the Irish Computer Society. As the Irish Licensee for the ECDL ICS Skills has been responsible for the successful implementation of ECDL in Ireland.

ICS SKILLS is a not-for-profit organisation.

As an organisation, it was formerly known as ECDL Ireland, and it now administers a much wider array of programmes. As well as ECDL, ICS SKILLS is responsible for delivering equalskills, ECDL Advanced, ECDL Specialist, ECDL Certified Training Professional, ICS SKILLS CERT, EUCIP and ChooseIT.

ICS SKILLS is based in Dublin, at: Crescent Hall, Mount Street Crescent, Dublin 2, and its clients and accredited test centres in the rest of Ireland are serviced by a team of Regional Development Officers.

ICS SKILLS has overseen the successful implementation of ECDL to the point where more than 6% of the Irish population have now embarked on an ECDL programme.

ICS SKILLS participates in many European projects and initiatives in the field of IT, and has representatives on product development and maintenance groups with the ECDL Foundation.

The Chief Executive of ICS SKILLS is Jim Friars.

About Itech-Research

Itech Research specialises in socio-economic research on information and communication technologies (ICT) in Ireland and Europe. Most of the work of Itech Research is aimed at improving policies and programmes.

In Ireland, Itech Research:

- Conducts studies and evaluations aimed at increasing ICT skills and digital inclusion
- Is active in initiatives to increase community participation on the Internet
- Contributes to developing national information society policy

At European level Itech Research:

- Conducts policy studies for the European Commission's Information Society Technologies (IST) Research Programme
- Is active in EU-level networks of researchers on the information society
- Presents research to major European conferences on the information society

Senior Consultant Dr. Susan O'Donnell has been researching social aspects of ICT since 1994. She has managed several major studies related to ICT skills, social inclusion and employment in Ireland and Europe.