

SHOCKING GAPS BETWEEN SELF-ASSESSED AND ACTUAL DIGITAL SKILLS REAFFIRM VALUE OF CERTIFICATION

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 18 April 2016

People risk falling victim to a widening digital skills gap thanks to poor awareness of digital skill levels. ECDL Foundation's latest position paper has examined the results of five digital literacy studies conducted in Europe, which find that people routinely overestimate their digital skills, and lack abilities in areas that are key to workplace productivity.

The paper, which was launched today, looked in detail at the results of studies carried out by the ECDL National Operators in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Switzerland. Even in countries that rank highly on international indexes for quality education systems and use of digital technologies, gaps were found in skills such as word processing, spreadsheets, and using everyday online tools. In one study, conducted in Austria, 94% of participants described their skills as "average" to "very good", but only 39% of them achieved a corresponding test result.

Damien O'Sullivan, CEO of ECDL Foundation said, "We are facing a new digital divide between people who have vital skills for the workplace, and people who don't. This paper shows how widespread the problem is. We are seeing poor digital skills in countries that are recognised for having very digital societies. What I find even more worrying is that people don't even know the extent of the problem or where they themselves are missing ICT skills. The findings of this paper make a strong case for structured training and certification of digital skills, to make sure that the workforce and businesses are ready to benefit from the opportunities that technology offers."

Each of the studies asked participants to rate their digital skills. This self-assessment was then put to the test using practical questions, and the results were compared. Even though countries like Switzerland or Denmark are highly-ranked for the quality of their education systems and on international indexes such as the Digital Economy & Society Index, significant gaps between self-assessment and actual performance were found across most categories of essential computer skills. The results point to the importance of providing evidence, such as certification, for any assessment of skills.

This paper continues ECDL Foundation's extensive work on raising digital competence standards worldwide, and builds on our previous papers on the fallacy of the 'digital native' and computing and digital literacy in schools.

ENDS

About ECDL

ECDL Foundation is an international organisation dedicated to raising digital competence standards in the workforce, education and society. Our certification programmes, delivered through an active network in more than 100 countries, enable individuals and organisations to assess, build and certify their competence in the use of computers and digital tools to the globally-recognised ECDL standard, known as ICDL worldwide.

As a nonprofit social enterprise ECDL Foundation (ICDL Foundation) benefits from the unique support of experts from national computer societies and partners worldwide to develop vendor-independent standards which define the skills and knowledge required to use digital technology effectively. We work with education and training partners, local and regional authorities, national governments, international development organisations as well as public and private sector employers in all sectors, in the delivery of our programmes.

The quality and reputation of ICDL is built on almost twenty years of experience in delivering our certification programmes to over 14 million people and in more than 40 languages worldwide, with more than 2.5 million ICDL tests taken annually. Our success is maintained by our ongoing innovation in certification programme development, our commitment to rigorous test design methodologies, and consistent adherence to our quality assurance standards.

Contact Details

Tom Redford

Communication Officer

Tel.: +32 (0)2 772 8251

Email: tom.redford@ecdL.org