ST chips away at digital divide

STMicroelectronics has chosen Malta for a pilot project to promote information technology among the local population.

The STMicroelectronics plant in Kirkop started organising basic and intermediate courses in computer use in the locality last year and the facility has now been expanded to other localities. The courses are free of charge.

Pasquale Pistorio, president and CEO of STMicroelectronics worldwide, said during a visit to Malta that the Bridging the Digital Divide Programme was a result of what UN secretary general Kofi Annan had told a task force he initiated in 2000. Mr Annan said the aim of the task force was to reduce the problems of poverty by 2015.

Dr Pistorio was selected as a member of the task force. His suggestion was that the firm he leads should be providing IT skills to about one million people in 10 years' time.

Once the programme is fine-tuned in Malta, it will be introduced in Malaysia, Morocco and India. The programme is coordinated by the ST Foundation.

Dr Pistorio suggested that other large corporations should join in this effort by providing software and hardware to complement the programme.

During his visit to the Kirkop plant, the CEO presented certificates to the latest batch of Maltese who successfully completed the customised programme in IT and internet competencies.

The Minister for IT and Public Investments, Austin Gatt, who attended the ceremony, said his ministry had completed various tasks aimed at bridging the digital divide,

This is IT: STMicroelectronics president and CEO Pasquale Pistorio (third from left) cracks a joke during his visit to the firm's Kirkop plant with IT Minister Austin Gatt (second from left) and ST trainers.

among them providing basic training to 4,000 people through the course MyWeb, installing 75 web phones around Malta and Gozo and setting up an internet centre in every local council.

"Malta can become the centre of excellence in IT in the Mediterranean," Dr Gatt said.