



**The European Commission Stagiaires
invite you to a conference:**

"Delivering Multialphabetism to the European citizen"

Brussels, January 31st, 2008 (12.00 - 14.00 h)

The European Commission's Multilingualism policy can only work if there is also Multialphabetism, i.e. the ability to write, to type and to encode letters from multiple alphabets.

In daily life, however, there are many obstacles to multialphabetism:

- **Keyboards** do not allow composition of all European accented characters (ǎ, č, ê, ĝ, ł, ń, ö, ū ...) and special characters (æ, ß, ð, þ ...)
 - "Alt key plus number" combinations are difficult to memorize and often yield only ASCII/ANSI characters, not the full Unicode range
- **Symbols menus** are difficult to use because characters from the same language may be spread over several planes
 - Many people do not know how to use a Symbols menu
 - Many programs (e.g. web browsers) do not even contain a Symbols menu
- The **European ICT market is fragmented** into a dozen of different **character sets** that are all **incompatible** with each other (ASCII, EBCDIC, Latin-1, ISO 8859-2, Windows-1252...)
- As a result, **public administration software** in the Member States is usually not capable of processing names with accented or special characters from other EU countries
 - This leads to **legal problems** (see [Art. 2 of CIEC agreement Nr. 14](#)) and to **discrimination of EU citizens** on basis of their nationality and language (see CoE Charter of Regional and Minority Languages)
 - This leads also to a lack of **interoperability** in the field of eGovernment (see [Interoperability Declaration of Valencia](#)).
- As another result, the **media** in Europe publish names and expressions in wrong spelling (e.g. Potocnik and Solidarnosc instead of Potočnik and Solidarność). This leads to disinformation of the media **consumer**
- **Web-based mailboxes** are usually not capable of processing text with accented or special characters from non-Western EU countries. So especially the young generation of Europeans gets accustomed to writing messages without accented or special characters or – in case of young Greeks and Bulgarians – even without using their own alphabet. This has a negative effect on their **orthographic abilities** and their **cultural identity** and compromises all efforts of language learning.

- Even "power users" like secretaries and journalists are usually **not trained** in how to insert special characters in texts. This means that the **curricula** in education need to be adapted to multilingualism policy.

This conference will address the problems, the technical and legal backgrounds and especially the latest **solutions** for delivering barrier-free multialphabetism to the European citizen.

Speakers:

- Mr Erkki I. Kolehmainen, Chairman of the CEN/ISSS workshop on functional multilingual extensions for European keyboards (confirmed)
- Mr Panagiotis Alevantis (DG Translation) who introduced Pan-European multilingualism into the European Commission's CELEX database (confirmed)

The speeches will be followed by a **discussion round**. Everyone who has encountered problems with multialphabetism is welcome to participate.

The results of the conference will be combined in a document with **recommendations** for support for multialphabetism on EU level and Member State level.

Location:

European Commission building CDMA
meeting rooms SDR1+2
rue de Champ de Mars, 21
B-1050 Brussels, Belgium

[\(see map\)](#)

Public transportation: Metro 2, station Porte de Namur

Contact and registration:

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