

(1999/C 182/069)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3263/98****by Panayotis Lambrias (PPE) to the Commission***(30 October 1998)**Subject:* Discriminatory treatment of the Greek language in the Commission

Despite the fact that the equality of the eleven official languages is enshrined in the Treaties, in practice the Greek language is discriminated against. Since Greek accession multilis, the language data-processing support system used by the Commission's central library, has not made any provision for the use of Greek letters; this means that Greek documents cannot be entered. Readers are therefore unable to use the ECLAS data bank when seeking Greek books on a European topic, a fact that discourages the library from procuring Greek books. Likewise no provision is made in many directorates-general for e-mail using Greek letters.

In view of this state of affairs, will the Commission say:

1. What measures does it intend to take as a general approach to the use of the Greek language in the field of language data-processing support systems?
2. Have studies and specific actions been undertaken, or are such studies and actions planned, on this question?
3. Does any special service group exist for the Greek language? If not, are any plans afoot to set such a group up?
4. Is there any cooperation between the Commission and the ECJ, given that the Court library has taken certain effective measures in this connection?

**Answer given by Mr Oreja on behalf of the Commission***(17 December 1998)*

As a general rule, the Commission's computing environment allows for unrestricted use of the Greek language. However, in some information systems, the use of rich Latin (with accented characters) and Greek still causes problems. That is why systems like CELEX use a completely separate database to store Greek texts.

The problem of using different sets of characters together is definitively resolved by the Unicode standard. The office automation tools which the Commission currently uses (Office97) adhere to this standard. Its information systems, however, do not yet do so, and must alternate between different character sets (ISO 8859/1 and ISO 8859/7) for the input and display of rich Latin and Greek. The Commission has had an interface developed to provide users with adequate input and display facilities for such alternation (mf-windows). This is the recommended solution for information systems with mixed storage of two character sets, until tools which allow full use of Unicode become available.

The updating and management of ECLAS, the Commission's library catalogue published on the Internet, is handled by the library management application DRA MultiLis. Version 11.1 of this software allows the input of Greek characters as an integral part of the package. This new version went into production in the Commission's libraries on 2 October 1998. This and the introduction of mf-windows means that the use of Greek characters in MultiLis is now possible.

Since the installation of version 11.1 of Multilis at the Commission, the Central Library has maintained close contact with the Court of Justice library in Luxembourg. The Court — which has the same software — has developed solutions to problems arising from the use of Greek characters in its own computing environment, which is different to that of the Commission (Unixware platform). The Commission is actively studying ways to implement these practical solutions in its own computing environment.