

**Message from ELRA's CEO:
Khalid Choukri**

Dear LREC participants,

Welcome to Athens, Greece and the second international conference on Language Resources and Evaluation.

The European Language Resources Association (ELRA), the Institute for Language and Speech Processing (ILSP) and the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) are very proud to welcome you to this second "Language Resources and Evaluation Conference" (LREC'2000).

About three years ago, we started thinking about organizing an important event that would focus exclusively on language resources problem and the issues related to the evaluation paradigms. This led to the first conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'98) in Granada. LREC'98 attracted more participants than the program committee ever imagined: over 510 attendees from 325 organizations in 38 countries. The number of accepted papers (about 200) illustrated the large number of issues that are handled in the field. It also proved the significant need to communicate on work carried out worldwide on the topics that are central to the conference.

The number of papers submitted to this second in the series of Language Resources and Evaluation Conferences (LREC'2000) points out that LREC is becoming a major event in the overall area of Human Language Technologies.

During the days to come, we will have great opportunities to learn some of the up-to-date technical progress and breakthroughs in areas concerning spoken, written and terminology resources as well as new evaluation projects and paradigms. A special word of thanks should therefore be extended to each of the authors of the 281 papers which are to be presented in the 30 sessions throughout the 3 days of the conference. In order to better plan for the delivery of the presentations, the program committee has placed 129 papers in oral sessions and 152 papers in poster sessions, taking into consideration the adequacy of the presentations to the oral versus poster communication mode. Selection criteria for oral and poster presentations have been identical.

Standing by the tradition established within the 1st LREC, there will be a number of satellite workshops. In particular, the program committee has accepted 10 pre-conference workshops addressing specific topics such as meta-data description for multimodal resources, large telephone speech databases, terminology resources & computation, evaluation of Machine Translation, Minority Languages, evaluation within the Human Language Technologies program, etc. We would like to thank all of the workshop organizers.

When planning for the conference, the program committee considered it essential to provide forums for an overview of the state-of-the-art, for exchange of information regarding on-going activities, and for the promotion of international co-operation initiatives. In order to do so, four key speakers have been invited and a set of panel discussions are planned. All of these are expected to bring interaction and debates on main issues of concern to us all.

In addition to the technical program, we will also organize an accompanying exhibition. We expect that a number of leading industrial and academic organizations will show us innovative applications, products and services during the three days of the conference.

Now a few words about the European Languages Resources Association (ELRA). ELRA was established in Luxembourg in February 1995, with the mission to promote the creation, verification, and distribution of language resources. A non-profit organization, ELRA aims to serve as a focal point for information related to Human Language Technologies in Europe. It collects, markets, distributes, and licenses language resources. ELRA also helps users and developers of language resources, government agencies, and other interested parties exploit language resources for a wide variety of uses. ELRA also serves as the European repository for EU-funded language resources. A detailed presentation of the recent developments within ELRA is included in these proceedings. For those of you who need to know more, please feel free to take the opportunity to talk with ELRA representatives.

The beauty of Greece may have enticed other participants to attend! So apart from the actual sessions and discussions, our Greek colleagues have planned a complete social program that will remind us of Granada! We hope that these events will make your stay in Athens a very pleasant experience and will give you memories to treasure. The social dinner on Friday May 2nd (the last day of the conference) will, apart from the delicious Greek banquet and the international atmosphere, show you something of the best that Greece has to offer.

The local organizers and the ELRA/ELDA staff are at your disposal and will be happy to help you for any problems which may occur.

Once again, we hope that everyone will be able to obtain valuable results and great accomplishments from this unique forum.

And finally, we hope that you will have an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful city of Athens and visit some of the unforgettable islands while you are here.

I look forward to meeting you,

Khalid Choukri,
ELRA CEO