

## **Message from ELRA CEO and ELDA managing director**

**Khalid Choukri**

Dear LREC participants,

Welcome to LREC 2006, welcome to Genoa

ELDA, the operational body and distribution agency of ELRA (Evaluations and Language resources Distribution Agency), is proud to welcome you in Genoa, where we are pleased to contribute to the organisation of this fifth edition of the Language Resources and Evaluation Conference, LREC 2006. We are very pleased to continue the organisation of such an important event in such an attractive city.

For ELDA, the strong involvement in the organization of LREC is part of the core mission of the task force set up by ELRA to conduct its strategy and actions. Since the beginning, ELDA considered that it was of paramount importance to join forces with other partners to organize LREC instead of delegating its organization to an "event" organizer that would not be acquainted with the field of Language Resources and Evaluation from the inside.

LREC 2006 is the fifth biennial conference on Language Resources and Evaluation, the fifth in a very successful series of events since ELRA initiated it with the strong involvement of the founders of ELRA and the continuous support of a large number of active organizations in the field. There is no doubt that LREC has become an essential milestone in the field of Human Language Resources and Evaluation, both for academic and industrial players. With more than 800 participants, LREC proves to be an unquestionable success and a fruitful forum for all of us. One of the challenges of such organization is to attract participants from academia and industry. With almost two thirds of the participants from academia and one third from industry, LREC achieves one of its goals: paving the way towards a rich cooperation between all sectors in this field.

Since the very beginning, LREC 1998, ELRA has also made sure that it meets with representatives of its members through its special offer to its members that benefit from favourable registration conditions. With over 100 participants per conference who attend from organizations members of ELRA, such goal has been achieved.

With the maintenance of a permanent web site (at [www.lrec-conf.org](http://www.lrec-conf.org)), and the possibility to have access to all LRECs proceedings, including the proceedings of workshops, ELDA is playing a role in making such treasure available over time.

ELRA and ELDA have also learned a lot from the science and technology that are presented at LREC. Some parts of these have to do with ELDA's daily activity. The infrastructure set up about 11 years ago is being challenged at various levels today.

The core activity of ELDA is identification of Language Resources, negotiation of distribution rights and cataloguing such LRs in our online catalogue. Over the years we have revised our catalogue to account for new types of resources (e.g. multimodal), new metadata sets, addition of evaluation packages, etc. Our distribution work is permanently reviewed in the light of the new trends and new distribution mechanisms, in particular today's licensing

schemes encourage us to investigate new modes inspired from "open sources" or GNU-like principles. This is yet another reason to offer a forum for discussion on the latest developments of Research in the field. Since 1998, LREC has also boosted the international cooperation, thanks to exchanges between researchers and industrial partners who could meet in these attractive LREC locations.

The large number of satellite workshops is also a good sign of the vitality of the field. Despite the difficulty in organizing all these events together, we maintain our objective of offering the best forum to all.

To better understand the LREC conference, it is necessary to elaborate a little bit on ELRA, the European Language Resources Association.

ELRA was founded in 1995, with the support of the European Commission. The main mission of the Association was to provide a clearing house for language resources, while promoting HLT more generally. In parallel, ELDA, the Evaluations and Language resources Agency, its operational body and distribution agency, was created to handle every activity in relation to the identification, collection, production, marketing and distribution of language resources, along with the participation in HLT evaluation campaigns and other HLT projects, at the European and international levels.

The collection and distribution of language resources are major activities for ELRA and ELDA and highlight the central role played by both bodies for the advances in the field. However, other crucial services related to language resources and language technologies are also offered. These include the validation of language resources, thus ensuring the best quality of the language resources presented in the catalogue, with the support of ELRA's network of validation centres; the production of language resources, mainly SLR within projects ELDA participates in; and the evaluation of speech and language technologies, with involvements in evaluation campaigns to ensure that evaluation resources (data test suites, protocols, methodologies, results, etc.) are packaged and made available to the HLT community, on the model of LR's distribution.

In order to serve better the HLT community, ELDA is always engaged in discussions with data providers to obtain the best distribution conditions for the R&D community. We hope that the debates taking place during LREC will convince some potential providers of the extreme importance of sharing data and tools.

If you would like to learn more about ELRA and ELDA, the ELRA/ELDA staff are at your disposal during the conference. You will also find more information on our web sites, at [www.elra.info](http://www.elra.info) and [www.elda.fr](http://www.elda.fr).

ELRA and the Organising Committee have made every effort to ensure the success of LREC 2006, making it a fruitful and enjoyable event. We hope that you will enjoy LREC 2006, benefiting at most from the conference programme, the satellite workshops, and the social programme. Hopefully, you will also get the opportunity to do some sightseeing, and enjoy Genoa and Italy.

On behalf of ELRA and ELDA, as well as on your behalf, I would like to warmly thank the local team in Genoa responsible for the practical aspects of this event. As you can imagine, organising such an important event is not an easy task to carry out.

Suggestions to improve any aspects of the conference are welcome, and if you need any assistance to make of this event a more memorable one, please do not hesitate to contact any of the members of our staff.

Once again, welcome to Genoa, welcome to LREC 2006.

Khalid Choukri  
ELRA CEO and ELDA managing Director