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Welcome address

In the tradition established at the EFNIL conferences, according to which each meeting focuses on a fundamental research or practice issue of great value for language and language policy, this 8th Annual Conference concentrates on Language, Languages and New Technologies: ICT in the Service of Languages. The theme will be approached through a series of general overview lectures delivered by expert guest speakers and in brief reports by delegates of member institutions.

The titles of the papers show clearly that a safe distance is generally kept from the *scopuli* of both technophobia and technomania. Indeed, the speakers obviously endeavour to read dispassionately the current state of things in the area of Information and Communication where new data and technological developments radically transform the landscape as it was known in the past; where especially under the influence of the multimedia technologies, and the global supremacy of the English language, the entire cycle of the perception and production of oral and written speech (and subsequently of *reading* too) is changing all over the world. Literacy is being redefined. Whereas, however, the massive impact of this ensemble of semiotic systems on the reconstruction of meaning is gradually becoming better and better understood by the linguistic community, one does not fail to be overwhelmed by the overabundance of English language digital environments in the Internet, while similar environments for the “less spoken languages” are far and between. The pressure on these languages is hard to sustain.

Under these circumstances, the question rises how we can best harness the technological horses into the chariot of language research and education to achieve best results for all languages. In the Centre for the Greek Language, in an effort to carve a clear policy to match this new reality and to practically intervene in the official educational language policy, we developed various digital environments for the Greek language, which have been proven very popular with both the educational and research community. It is, however, our experience and firm believe that here cooperation among our institutions is most desirable in order to move towards a common European policy –a policy that will define problems, set priorities and discuss and propose solutions. It is in this spirit that we are more than happy to host this important Conference in Thessaloniki.

Προς τον καθηγητή Γεραρδο Στικελ, προς όλα τα μέλη της διπλής οργανωτικής επιτροπής και προς όλους εσάς που εργαστήκατε εντατικά για να πετύχει η διοργάνωση αυτή εκφράζω τις θερμότερες ευχαριστίες και την ειλικρινέστερη ευγνωμοσύνη μου. Σας εύχομαι ένα συνέδριο επιτυχημένο από κάθε άποψη, και άνετη και ευχάριστη την παραμονή σας στη Θεσσαλονίκη. (To Professor Gerhard Stickel, to the entire organizational committee from either side and to all of you who worked hard to make a success of this event I offer my warmest thanks and most sincere gratitude. We wish you a most successful conference and a comfortable and pleasant stay in Thessaloniki.)