29 March, 2013

Ingars Pilmanis
Head of Latvian Standarad
Standardisation, Accreditation and Metrology Centre
157 Kr. Valdemāra Str.
Rīga, LV-1013

Dear Mr. Pilmanis,

As the Chair of the Unicode Technical Committee (UTC), the standards group that maintains the international character encoding standard Unicode, I wanted to bring to the attention of the Latvian National Body a change that has been requested in the representation of certain characters that have either a cedilla or a comma below. This change would have an impact on the representation of Latvian text data, both for existing data, and for the representation of data going forward in the future.

To summarize the situation with an example, the Latvian orthography has historically used legacy ISO character sets that named the letter n with a comma below as LATIN LETTER N WITH CEDILLA. The Unicode Standard, with Version 3.0, also began to publish U+0146 LATIN SMALL LETTER N WITH CEDILLA with a representative glyph of n with comma below, and annotated such use in Latvian. Unfortunately, this practice has created great ambiguity in the actual identity of the character U+0146 LATIN SMALL LETTER N WITH CEDILLA. Users of the standard could be confused whether they should make their selection based on the glyph (which shows a comma below) or the name (which is named WITH CEDILLA).

The UTC was recently asked to correct the representative glyph of U+0146 to actually be an n with cedilla, as that representation is required for Marshallese. However, it was clear that making such a change had the unwanted side effect of potentially destabilizing the representation of Latvian text data. Thus, we are reaching out to you.

Members of the UTC will be present at a meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania from 10-14 June, 2013, and would very much like to take advantage of geographic proximity to meet with representatives from Latvia to discuss this situation. Meeting representatives in Vilnius would be a welcome opportunity to hear the Latvian community's opinions and views.

Please let us know if you have any questions, and if you would be able to send a representative to Vilnius. Attached you will find the original paper that raised the issue, as well as a summary of transition considerations and the potential impact to the Latvian community if the UTC decides to make this change. You may reach me via email at either lisa@unicode.org or lisam@us.ibm.com. My mobile number is 001-650-207-0460.

With kind regards,

Lisa Moore
Chair, Unicode Technical Committee